

High Commission of India
Colombo

PRESS RELEASE

Defence Adviser to the High Commission of India calls on Defence Secretary and Commanders of Sri Lanka Army and Sri Lanka Navy

After observing the health protocols stipulated by the Government of Sri Lanka for diplomats arriving in the country, the new Defence Adviser to the High Commission of India Captain (Indian Navy) Vikas Sood has had interactions with the leadership of Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence and armed forces in the past week.

2. Captain Sood paid courtesy calls on Sri Lanka's Defence Secretary Maj. Gen. (Retd) Kamal Gunaratne on 28 July 2020, Acting Chief of Defence Staff and Commander of the Sri Lanka Army Lt Gen. Shavendra Silva on 27 July and Commander of the Sri Lanka Navy Vice Admiral Nishantha Ulugetenne on 29 July.

3. During these interactions, marked by traditional cordiality and camaraderie between the armed forces of the two countries, a range of matters of mutual interest in bilateral defence cooperation was discussed. Strong commitment to further strengthen the defence relationship between the two countries was reiterated by participants on both sides.

4. It was noted that India and Sri Lanka enjoy a strong and growing defence relationship pillared on extensive cooperation in capacity building, such as through training, and other close linkages. More than 50% of all foreign military training slots in India are allocated to Sri Lankan defence personnel. It was observed that commonality of security concerns and challenges as well as the mutual resolve to address them for ensuring peace and security in our shared region guide the bilateral defence ties. Regular high level exchanges and visits, joint training and exercises, ship visits and sports interactions are the key elements of this robust cooperation.

5. Satisfaction was expressed at several high level exchanges and interactions between the two countries in the field of defence this year, despite the travel restrictions in the wake of the COVID 19 pandemic. Besides several delegation level visits, Maj Gen (retired) Kamal Gunaratne alongwith Lt Gen Shavendra Silva, participated in Def Expo 2020 at Lucknow, India in February 2020.

6. Gratitude of India for the excellent cooperation by Sri Lanka Navy and Sri Lanka Ports Authority in the repatriation of Indian nationals from Sri Lanka in June 2020 when INS Jalashwa undertook a visit to Sri Lanka was conveyed. The smooth conduct of this

operation is a testimony to extremely close ties between Indian and Sri Lankan Armed Forces.

7. It was also noted that in line with the commitment of the leadership of the two countries to cooperate in facing COVID 19 challenges, India had extended essential medical assistance to Sri Lanka in recent months. In this context, it was recalled that the Indian Navy had gifted two transportation pods for transferring COVID 19 patients and four thermal scanners to Sri Lanka Navy. In the context of sharing Sri Lanka's valuable experience in effectively fighting COVID, the recent participation of Maj Gen HJS Gunawardena, Chief of Staff of Sri Lanka Army in a webinar organised by India for various partner countries including Bangladesh, Thailand and Myanmar to share best practices followed by Sri Lanka was appreciated.

8. It was noted that the participation of more than 400 personnel from tri-services of Sri Lanka in the celebration of 'International Day of Yoga' on 21 June this year at Sri Lanka Army Headquarters is a further testimony to the close professional and cultural affinity between the two countries and their armed forces.

Colombo
10 Shravana Saka 1942
1 August 2020