

INDIA-SRILANKA RELATIONS THROUGH PARLIAMENTARY DIPLOMACY

- INTERNATIONAL RELATION

Both India and Sri Lanka welcome the formation of Sri Lanka-India Parliamentary friendship association as a positive initiative. A recent visit by a Sri Lankan parliamentary delegation to India reinforced the deep bilateral ties between the two nations. This strategic relationship is actively guided by India's 'Neighbourhood First' policy and the maritime 'Vision SAGAR' framework.

Deepening India-Sri Lanka Relations Through Parliamentary Diplomacy

1. Context - High-Level Parliamentary Engagement

Recent Diplomatic Meeting - A high-level Sri Lankan Parliamentary Delegation, headed by Minister Dr. Nalinda Jayatissa, recently concluded a significant visit to New Delhi, where they met with the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Shri Om Birla.

Significance of the Meeting - This interaction underscores the strengthening of bilateral relations, firmly rooted in India's foundational foreign policy principles of 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Vision SAGAR'. It highlights the growing role of parliamentary diplomacy in fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between the two nations.

2. Strategic and Policy Dimensions

Centrality to Indian Foreign Policy - Sri Lanka is a pivotal partner for India and holds a central position in two key strategic frameworks -

1. **'Neighbourhood First' Policy** - This policy prioritizes building strong, mutually beneficial, and collaborative relationships with India's South Asian neighbors. For Sri Lanka, this translates into focused political, economic, and developmental engagement.
2. **'Vision SAGAR' (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** - This is India's maritime doctrine for the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). It aims to create a secure, stable, and prosperous maritime domain through collective action, information sharing, and sustainable development. Sri Lanka's strategic location in the IOR makes it an indispensable partner in this vision.

Growing Strategic Convergence - The deepening of ties is evidenced by a series of high-level political exchanges, which reinforce mutual trust and align strategic interests.

1. Visit by Indian PM Shri Narendra Modi to Sri Lanka (April 2025).
2. Visit by Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake to India (December 2024).

India as a First Responder - India demonstrated its unwavering commitment as a reliable partner during Sri Lanka's severe economic crisis in 2022-23.

1. **Substantial Financial Assistance** - India provided unprecedented support amounting to nearly \$4 billion.
2. **Forms of Aid** - This assistance was multifaceted and timely, including credit lines for essential imports, currency swap arrangements to bolster Sri Lanka's foreign reserves, and the direct provision of critical supplies like fuel, medicines, and food. This aid was crucial in helping Sri Lanka stabilize its economy and manage the humanitarian crisis.

3. Institutional Cooperation and Parliamentary Diplomacy

Strengthening Legislative Ties - The establishment of the Sri Lanka-India Parliamentary Friendship Association serves as a formal institutional mechanism. It facilitates regular dialogue, exchange of ideas, and goodwill between the parliamentarians of both countries, thereby strengthening diplomatic relations at a legislative level.

India's Democratic Outreach (PRIDE) - Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla highlighted the role of PRIDE (Parliamentary Research and Training Institute for Democracies).

Global Capacity Building - PRIDE is India's premier institution for providing training and capacity-building programs to legislators and parliamentary staff from around the world.

Extensive Reach – Having trained officials from over 110 countries, PRIDE showcases India's commitment to sharing its democratic experiences and strengthening democratic institutions globally.

Digital Innovation in Governance – India shared its successful adoption of digital innovations and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in its Parliament. These initiatives are aimed at –

1. **Enhancing Transparency and Efficiency** – Using technology for legislative research, real-time translation, and data management.
2. **Promoting Paperless Functioning** – Reducing environmental impact and modernizing parliamentary processes for faster, more accessible governance.

4. Cultural, Developmental, and Security Cooperation

Shared Civilisational Heritage – The bond between India and Sri Lanka is deeply rooted in a shared history and culture spanning millennia.

Key Cultural Links – This connection is actively promoted through joint initiatives like the Buddhist and Ramayana tourism circuits, which connect pilgrims and tourists to sites of profound religious and cultural significance in both nations, fostering strong people-to-people ties.

Broad-Based Bilateral Cooperation – The partnership today is comprehensive, covering a wide range of sectors critical for mutual growth and stability.

Key Areas – Active cooperation is ongoing in defence, joint military exercises, energy (including renewable energy projects), health, education, bilateral trade, and vibrant cultural exchanges.

Pivotal Role in Regional Security – India's engagement with Sri Lanka is a cornerstone of its strategy to ensure peace and stability in the Indian Ocean Region.

Maritime Security Frameworks – This cooperation is institutionalized through platforms like the Colombo Security Conclave (CSC), which brings together India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and Mauritius to collaborate on shared maritime security challenges like counter-terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and cybersecurity.

Alignment with Indo-Pacific Strategy – This regional security architecture complements India's broader vision for a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

Source – <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2161649>

