

# Indian External Affairs Minister meets President Ranil Wickremesinghe



President Ranil Wickremesinghe and Dr. S. Jaishankar, Indian Minister of External Affairs.

India's Minister of External Affairs, Dr. S. Jaishankar met with President Ranil Wickremesinghe at the Presidential Secretariat.

Extensive discussions were held to further strengthen Indo-Sri Lankan relations, resulting in the signing of three new bilateral agreements aimed at enhancing cooperation between the two countries.

Furthermore, the inauguration of the third phase of the housing project, supported

by Indian loan assistance, was conducted during the meeting. While an initial allocation of Rs. 1.026 million had been allocated per unit for the fourth phase, it was necessary to revise the budget to Rs. 2.8 million per unit due to increased housing unit costs.

To uplift the lives of Sri Lankan citizens, the Government of India has committed to providing additional funds for the speedy completion of nine development projects in the country, which are currently supported by the Government of India.

The relevant agreement for this initiative was also signed today. These projects include the modernization of 27 schools in the Northern Province, housing initiatives in Mannar and Anuradhapura, improvements to the Hatton Thondaman Vocational Training Centre and Pussellawa Saraswati Central College, the construction of a multi-ethnic trilingual school in Polonnaruwa, the establishment of 2,889 rainwater harvesting projects in the Jaffna area, the promotion of vegetable cultivation in the Dambulla area and the construction of greenhouse facilities with a capacity of 5000 metric tons for fruit preservation. Additionally, a new surgical unit for the Batticaloa Teaching Hospital will be promptly built as part of these efforts.

An agreement concerning a joint project involving the Indian National Dairy Development Board, the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation of India (Amul), and the Cargills Group of Sri Lanka was signed with the aim of elevating Sri Lanka's local dairy industry. This agreement emerged as a result of President Ranil Wickremesinghe's official visit to India and allocation of funding for the modernization of Sri Lanka's livestock sector.

The primary objective of this new project is to increase milk production by 53% within the first five years and achieve self-sufficiency in milk production for Sri Lanka within 15 years.

As part of this endeavour, it is anticipated that approximately 200,000 local farmers will be empowered through the provision of facilities such as high-quality medicines, animal nutrition and technical support.

Furthermore, this initiative encompasses digitalization of the livestock sector, investments in new technologies to enhance the quality of milk-related by-products and ensuring access to milk-related products at affordable prices.

In addition to this significant agreement, a special commemorative logo was

unveiled to celebrate the 75 years of Indo-Sri Lankan relations.

Present at the signing ceremony were Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Gopal Baglay, Union Secretaries of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs Puneeth Agrawal and J. P. Singh, Indian Deputy High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Dr Satyanjal Pandey and Indian Ministry of External Affairs Deputy Secretary Raghu Puri.



President with Gopal Baglay, Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka; S. Jaishankar, India's Minister of External Affairs; Ali Sabry, Minister of Foreign Affairs; and Jeevan Thondaman, Minister of Water Supply and Estate Infrastructure Development.



