

# Strengthening Historic Indo-Lanka Joint Vision for the Next 25 Years

July 21, 2023.



President Ranil Wickremesinghe and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe, on his maiden official visit to India after assuming Presidency, conveyed a resolute commitment to strengthen the bilateral ties between India and Sri Lanka.

Addressing an esteemed gathering that included Prime Minister Narendra Modi and dignitaries from both countries, the President expressed gratitude for the warm hospitality extended during his visit and underscored the significance of this diplomatic mission.

Emphasizing the remarkable progress witnessed under Prime Minister Modi's leadership in India, the President commended the strides made in economic, infrastructure, and technological domains. He highlighted that India's growth serves as a positive force for the entire region, including the Indian Ocean region.

In return, the President briefed Prime Minister Modi about the challenges faced by Sri Lanka in the past year and the extensive reform measures implemented to overcome them. He expressed profound appreciation for the solidarity and support extended by India during Sri Lanka's trying times.

During their discussions, the President outlined his vision for economic recovery and sustainable growth in Sri Lanka. He shared comprehensive proposals for reconciliation, power-sharing through devolution, and the Northern development plan, inviting all party leaders to work towards consensus and national unity.

Furthermore, both leaders emphasized the significance of enhanced connectivity between the two nations to foster economic partnership. They recognized the deep-rooted historical, cultural, and commercial ties and believed that the present moment presented an opportune time to embark on a joint vision for the future.

Both leaders expressed optimism that the discussions held would pave the way for a prosperous and secure future for the people of India and Sri Lanka. The joint vision forged during this momentous occasion is set to reinforce trust, strengthen geographical and civilizational links, and propel the Indo-Lanka relationship to new heights for the next 25 years.

Following is the statement delivered by President Ranil Wickremesinghe during the official visit to India:

"I am honoured to be in New Delhi at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This is my first visit to India since assuming office as President last year and it is a visit to which myself and my Government attach the highest importance.

I thank the PM Modi and the Government of India for the hospitality extended to me

and to my delegation.

PM Modi and I had the occasion to review at length recent developments in our countries as well as in our bilateral relations. I have congratulated PM Modi on the great strides India continues to make under his leadership in economic, infrastructure and technological progress in ensuring growth and prosperity for the people of India. We believe that India's growth will be beneficial to the neighbourhood and Indian Ocean region.

I have also apprised with Prime Minister Modi of the extraordinary challenges that Sri Lanka had experienced in economic, social and political terms in the past year, and of the reform measures I have spearheaded on a number of fronts, in overcoming these challenges.

I have conveyed to PM Modi and to the government and people of India our profound appreciation for the solidarity and support rendered to Sri Lanka in what was undoubtedly the most challenging period in our recent history.

In reviewing recent developments in Sri Lanka, I shared with Prime Minister Modi my commitment to bring about economic recovery leading to sustainable and stable growth with justice and equity which will benefit all segments of Sri Lankan society in all parts of the country.

In moving forward, I have explained that I have set Sri Lanka firmly on a path of economic reform and that Sri Lanka is already witnessing the stabilizing outcomes of these measures and the revival of confidence internally and externally in the progress of the country. I also shared with him the comprehensive proposal I presented this week for furthering reconciliation, power sharing through devolution and the multiple elements of the Northern development plan. I have invited all party leaders in Parliament to work towards consensus and national unity on these measures. Thereafter the Government will place the relevant legislation before Parliament. Prime Minister Modi has expressed his solidarity and goodwill in these endeavours. We now need to put our economy on a growth path bringing greater revenue for the country, which requires enhanced investment in all parts of the country. As a supportive and solid foundation for the realization of these objectives, we have agreed on a Joint Vision of the future India -Sri Lanka economic partnership through enhanced connectivity.

Today, in this 75<sup>th</sup> year of our bilateral diplomatic relations, our Vision will propel us

towards a more secure future through mutually beneficial interactions, to bring tangible benefits and greater opportunities for our future generations in the coming decades.

The foundations of our joint vision of greater future connectivity have already been laid through millennia-old civilizational, cultural, human and commercial interactions between our two countries.

The thread of connectivity is woven through our history. In our view, the present time is a most opportune moment to embark on such a vision for the future.

We recognized that modern-day connectivity plays a crucial role in realizing our vision of economic partnership. The recent recommencement of Chennai and Jaffna air services is an important step towards air connectivity. We believe that expansion of aviation connectivity to other destinations and further development of Palaly airport will complement this initiative. Ferry services between Talaimannar-Rameswaram and Nagapattinam-Kankesanthurai will add more impetus to sea travel between the two countries. Examining other forms of connectivity between Sri Lanka and India could become a further catalyst to boost economic growth.

We agreed that the Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement between Sri Lanka and India is critical to enhance bilateral trade and investment in new and priority areas. Sri Lanka is pleased to welcome Indian assistance in digital tech driven service delivery and citizen centric services.

We agreed that enhanced connectivity will also play a crucial role in strengthening our cooperation in tourism, people-to-people exchanges and cultural relations. The tourism industry in Sri Lanka is poised to reap the benefits of the post-pandemic world and India is currently the top market for inbound tourism for Sri Lanka. Enabling UPI based digital payments in Sri Lanka would immensely facilitate further growth in this and other sectors.

In keeping with Sri Lanka's national priorities and global commitments towards a greener economy, and also to ensure energy security, Sri Lanka sees valuable opportunities in partnering with India in green and renewable energy development. In this context, I am pleased to note the conclusion of the Memorandum of Understanding for Cooperation in the field of Renewable Energy. Establishing the high-capacity power grid interconnection between Sri Lanka and India would enable two-way electricity trade between the two countries.

The development of Trincomalee as an energy hub with the support of India is a crucial step towards Sri Lanka's goal to elevate Trincomalee as a hub for industry and other economic activities. Prime Minister Modi and I believe that the construction of a multi-product petroleum pipeline from Southern part of India to Sri Lanka will ensure an affordable and reliable supply of energy resources to Sri Lanka.

We also discussed how to improve our cooperation in the dairy and animal husbandry sectors to realize our common interest in achieving greater socio-economic development, and enhance the nutrition status of our people.

Cooperation in the education sector is one of the key elements in our bilateral relationship. We believe that establishing new higher education institutes with the assistance from India is important. This will contribute towards upgrading the knowledge and skills of our youth and include them in the nation's development drive.

I believe that my visit to India has provided an opportunity to review our bilateral relationship. We believe that establishing new higher education institutes with the assistance from India is important. This will contribute towards upgrading the knowledge and skills of our youth and include them in the nation's development drive.

I believe that my visit to India has provided an opportunity to review our bilateral relationship, leverage the strength of geographical and civilizational links, and reinforce trust and confidence for our future prosperity in the modern world. I am confident that the discussions we had today will lay the foundation for the next 25 years of Indo-Lankan relations and contribute to my vision for sustainable growth national unity and reconciliation for all segments of the people of Sri Lanka and for a prosperous and secure future for the people of India and Sri Lanka.



President Ranil Wickremesinghe and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressing the gathering.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi and delegates in discussion with President Ranil Wickremesinghe and delegates.



Joint Declaration of Intent (JDI) in the field of Animal Husbandry and Dairying between Milinda Moragoda, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India and Alka Upadhyaya, Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying.



A MoU between India and Sri Lanka on Renewable energy, Economic development of projects in Trincomalee district and Network to Network Agreement between NIPL and Lanka Pay for UPI application acceptance in Sri Lanka usage was exchanged between Milinda Moragoda, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to India and Gopal Bhagley, High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka.