

A Seminar was held in New Delhi on 11th December 2006 on the subject of "India-Sri Lanka Maritime Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges". The Seminar covered a wide range of subjects, including the security dimension, the potential for collaboration for the sustainable exploitation of living and non-living marine resources, and the cooperation required for the protection and preservation of the maritime environment. A range of senior Indian and Sri Lankan personalities from the governmental and the non-governmental sectors and academia participated in the Seminar. At the New Delhi end, the National Maritime Foundation of India was responsible for conceptually developing the Seminar and then hosting it. At the Colombo end, the Ministry of Defence, Public Security, Law & Order was the lead agency involved in arranging for Sri Lanka's contribution to the Seminar.

The Inaugural Address was delivered by Mr. Shyam Saran, former Foreign Secretary of India, while Keynote Addresses were delivered by Admiral Sureesh Mehta, Chief of Naval Staff of the Indian Navy and by Mr. Romesh Jayasinghe, High Commissioner of Sri Lanka in India. The Concluding Address was by Mr. K.C. Pant, former Defence Minister in India.

For the Sri Lanka side, Dr. Champa Amarasiri, Director - General of NARA presented a paper on the theme of "Maritime Resource Exploitation: Building Partnerships". The Head of the Industrial Technology Institute, Dr. A.M. Mubarak, submitted a paper on "Environmental Challenges", while Rear Admiral T.S.G. Samarasinghe of the Sri Lanka Navy in his paper dealt with the subject of "Sustainable Cooperative Security: Challenges and Options". Dr. John Gooneratne's paper dealt with "Sri Lankan Prognosis and Outlook".

From the Indian side, three papers were presented, namely on "Offshore Oil & Gas: Exploring Joint Development" by Mr. L.L. Budhiraja, "Indian Prognosis and Outlook" by Prof. V. Suryanarayan and "India's Security Concerns and Response" by Vice Admiral P.S. Das.

It was recognized during the Seminar that the maritime domain constitutes an important medium for mutually beneficial collaboration between the two neighbouring countries. The speakers identified the practical measures that may be taken, especially with regard to combating maritime threats posed by non-state actors, for the joint management of the environment including in the region of the Sethusamudram Ship Channel Project, and for the exchange of scientific and other data pertaining to living and non-living marine resources. The possibility of establishing a Joint Fisheries Commission to commercially exploit in a sustainable and mutually beneficial manner the maritime fisheries resources of the two countries, was also mooted.

The National Maritime Foundation in its capacity as host of the Seminar, would be presenting the outcome of the proceedings to the concerned authorities on both sides.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

Colombo.

12 December 2006