



Ayubowan

Hon. Dr. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs of India,
Hon Tharaka Balasuriya, Regional Minister of State for Foreign Affairs
H.E. Mr. Gopal Baglay, High Commissioner of India,
Members of the Indian and Sri Lankan Delegation,
Dear friends of the Media

I would like to thank the External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar for visiting Sri Lanka as his first overseas engagement this year. Thank you Dr. Jaishankar.

I held cordial and friendly bilateral discussions with Hon. Dr. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs of India, who is undertaking an official visit to Sri Lanka.

Your Excellency, Sri Lanka was blessed thrice by the visits of Gauthama the Buddha 2600 years ago,

2300 years ago the arrival of Mahinda Maha Thero and Sangamitta Thera, son & daughter of Emperor Asoka the great of Bharatha, established the Buddhasasana in Sri Lanka.

The immense cultural bonds strengthen our friendship in all times. Furthermore, today our two Nations are the foremost Parliamentary Democracies in Asia.

His Excellency President Gotabaya Rajapaksa firmly stated that he is committed to the wellbeing progress and opportunities of all our citizens Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and all.

During our talks, we focused on multiple areas of mutual cooperation in the identified sectors of economics, finance, trade, commerce, defence, security and fisheries, cultural and particularly on the ongoing Covid 19 pandemic and the post Covid era that we are moving forward to and efforts we have jointly taken since the outbreak last year.

On behalf of His Excellency the President Gotabaya Rajapaksa, Government and the people of Sri Lanka, I convey our profound gratitude to the Prime Minister Hon. Narendra Modi and the Indian government and to you External Affairs Minister for the tremendous support India extended during this past several months to mitigate the adverse impact of the Covid pandemic.

The Indian Government's "Neighbourhood First" policy made a very positive impact on our health sector and the economy during the critical period unprecedented crisis and also extended assistance to repatriate Sri Lankans, pilgrims, students and medically concerned.

My delegation sought India's partnership for our economic revival, stability through enhanced investments in different sectors of the economy. Of course, as close neighbours and being littoral states of the Indian Ocean, we discussed defence and security related matters, as well as the issues related to maritime and fisheries sectors.

We agreed to continue our current momentum of coordinated and close dialogue in these areas in order also to curb illegal activities and our continued cooperation in the BIMSTEC, IORA and SAARC.

At a time when knowledge and technology become great factors of global presence, the youth of our nations will certainly lead us to a promising tomorrow.

As we work closely and mostly on harnessing clean renewable energy like solar and wind to

drive our economies, our collective thought on environment enrichment will positively largely contribute towards combating the global climate change.

Green economy is complimented by the vast Blue Economy that our surroundings are naturally gifted with. Our continued dialogues in this area will provide strengthen movement to the future.

India's offer of US \$ 15 million to restore Buddhist heritage extended by India as announced by Prime Minister Hon. Shri Narendra Modi during his Virtual Summit with the Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa last September, will be utilized through mutual consultations. Also, I thanked India for constructing the Jaffna Cultural Center at the cost over US \$ 11 million, which will be declared open as we agree on the date.

Hon. Dr. Jaishankar met with His Excellency the President this morning and held productive discussions. External Affairs Minister is also scheduled to have a meeting with Hon. Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa.

Once again, I would like to thank Dr. Jaishankar, Minister of External Affairs, for support extended to Sri Lanka and wish him success for all his endeavours in the New Year, good health and happiness.

Blessings of the Triple Gems, Your Excellency.

I thank you.