



Sri Lanka's High Commissioner to India, Milinda Moragoda explored avenues of further augmenting defence and security cooperation with India, when he met the Defence Minister of India Shri Rajnath Singh in New Delhi, today (30).

Minister Singh extended a warm welcome to High Commissioner Moragoda. The Defence Minister of India and the High Commissioner of Sri Lanka discussed a range of issues, reviewing the existing excellent defence and security ties between the two countries.

High Commissioner Moragoda thanked the Defence Minister for the support that the Indian defence establishment has been extending to Sri Lanka over the years in many spheres. He thanked India for assisting in controlling the disastrous fires onboard MT New Diamond and MV Express Pearl off the coast of Sri Lanka, which would have resulted in unimaginable marine pollution in the region, had they not been controlled in a timely and efficient manner.

The High Commissioner also thanked India for the training opportunities accorded to Sri Lankan military students. It was noted that at any given time there are around 700 Sri Lankan military students undergoing training in India. Sri Lanka is the largest single recipient of Indian training berths in the defence sector. The High Commissioner suggested that the possibility be explored for the provision of further training opportunities for Sri Lankan military students in India.

The High Commissioner particularly conveyed to Defence Minister Singh his appreciation for the assistance extended by India to Sri Lanka by sending military aircraft with medical supplies during the covid-19 pandemic, transporting much needed medical grade oxygen to Sri Lanka by INS Shakti and facilitating transportation of the same by SLNS Shakthi, and for air lifting a consignment of urgently required nano-nitrogen fertilizer by transport aircraft of the Indian Air Force recently. In this context, the offer by the Indian Navy to donate a large-scale oxygen generator to Sri Lanka was also appreciated.

The High Commissioner also recalled how the Indian defence establishment supported the repatriation of Sri Lankan military students during the initial months of the lock-down in 2020, by way of facilitating their movement by road, sea and air, and thanked the Minister for this facilitation.

The two dignitaries took note of the annual bilateral Joint Military and Naval exercises and discussed avenues through which the existing bilateral defence and security cooperation could be further strengthened. They also observed with satisfaction the immense progress achieved by the Colombo Security Conclave during the past one year.

High Commissioner Moragoda also presented a copy of his policy road map "Integrated Country Strategy for Sri Lanka Diplomatic Missions in India 2021/2023" to the Defence Minister. The High Commissioner was accompanied by the High Commission's Defence Advisor Commodore Thushara Karunatunga (SLN) to the meeting.

A former President of the Bhartiya Janata Party, Shri Rajnath Singh is a veteran politician with an illustrious career. Prior to be appointed as the Minister of Defence in May 2019, he held the portfolio of Home Minister in the Cabinet of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Shri Rajnath Singh had also served as the Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh in early 2000s. He is also the Deputy Leader of the House of the Lok Sabha at present.

High Commissioner Moragoda seeks greater defence and security cooperation with India

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