



## India- Sri Lanka

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### Why in News

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At the invitation of the Prime Minister of India, Sri Lankan Prime Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa visited India from 8<sup>th</sup>–11<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

The Prime Minister of Sri Lanka also went to the Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi, the **Maha Bodhi temple in Bodh Gaya** and Tirupati (Andhra Pradesh).

### Key Points

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- **Tamil Issue:**
  - India expressed confidence in Sri Lanka to carry forward the process of reconciliation of Tamils in Sri Lanka.
  - India has also requested to fulfil the aspirations of the Tamils for equality, justice, peace and respect in Sri Lanka.
- **Development in War Affected Areas:**
  - Sri Lanka has requested India to build more houses in the north and east. India has so far helped build 46,000 homes in the war-affected areas.
  - It has also requested to provide assistance for deep-sea fishing techniques which will help to create employment opportunities to people.
- **Joint Marine Resources Management Authority:**
  - Sri Lanka has also proposed to set up a Joint Marine Resources Management Authority between two countries.
  - The commission will have seven members from either side, including bureaucrats, researchers, fishermen's association representatives.
  - The proposed Authority is expected to find a lasting solution to the Palk Bay fisheries conflict.

The Palk Strait is a strait between the Tamil Nadu state of India and the Jaffna District of the Northern Province of Sri Lanka.

- **Debt Trap:**

- They also discussed **countering 'debt traps'** experienced by Sri Lanka.
- Debt-trap diplomacy refers to the strategy used by China to lure or trap developing or underdeveloped countries like in Africa to borrow money to be used for much-needed infrastructure projects. China claims it to be a simple tactic for financial strategies.

- **Indian Ocean Region:**

- Both the countries agreed to provide close cooperation for peace and prosperity in the Indian Ocean Region and even in the **Indo-Pacific region**.
- India also reinforced the security of Indian ocean with its **'Neighbourhood First'** policy and **SAGAR (Security and Growth for all in the Region)**.
  - SAGAR is an articulation of India's vision for the Indian Ocean.
  - SAGAR has elements such as enhancement of capacities to safeguard land and maritime territories & interests; deepening economic and security cooperation in the littoral; action to deal with natural disasters and maritime threats like piracy, terrorism.

- **Terrorism:**

Both countries aimed to strengthen the contacts and cooperation between the counter-terrorism agencies of the two countries.

### India - Sri Lanka Relations



- India is Sri Lanka's closest neighbour. The **relationship** between the two countries is more than 2,500 years old and both sides have built upon a legacy of intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic intercourse.
- During the course of the civil war, India supported the right of the Government of Sri Lanka to act against terrorist forces.
- The **Indian Housing Project** is Government of India's flagship project of developmental assistance to Sri Lanka. Its initial commitment is to build 50,000 houses for those affected by the civil war as well as for the estate workers in the plantation areas.

- Given the proximity of the territorial waters of both countries, especially in the Palk Straits and the Gulf of Mannar, incidents of straying of fishermen are common. Both countries have agreed on certain practical arrangements to deal with the issue of bona fide fishermen of either side crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line.
- India and Sri Lanka conduct joint Military ( 'Mitra Shakti') and Naval exercise (SLINEX).
- Recently, the Chennai (India) -Jaffna (Sri Lanka) flight service has resumed after a gap of 41 years.

The flight operations were suspended during the decades-old civil war in Sri Lanka.

**Source: PIB**