



India to Get Control of Hambantota Airport

India has agreed to form a joint venture with Sri Lanka to operate the country's Mattala Rajapaksa International Airport in Hambantota.

- The \$210 million facility, 241km south-east of Colombo, is dubbed the “**world's emptiest airport**” due to a lack of flights.
- The joint venture would see India gain a major stake of the airport.
- The final terms of the agreement, however, remain to be worked out.
- The loss-making Mattala airport, named after former president Mahinda Rajapaksa, was one of the major infrastructure projects of Rajapaksa's nearly a decade-long rule.
- The project was funded through high interest Chinese commercial loans.
- The airport was officially opened in March 2013 but the only international flight operating from there was halted in May due to recurrent losses and flight safety issues.
- The seaport built in Hambantota has been leased to China to set off Chinese loans as equity.
- Gaining control of the airport is being **seen as a strategic gain by India** and it will look out to avoid being tagged as a deal that erodes Sri Lankan sovereignty, a criticism attached to Chinese management of the port.

PDF Reference URL: <https://www.drishtias.com/printpdf/india-to-get-control-of-hambantota-airport>