

TODAY'S IMPORTANT CURRENT AFFAIRS

UPSC Mains

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INDIA SRILANKA BILATERAL RELATIONS

Source: The post is based on the article published in “The Hindu” on 08.04.2025.

In News: Modi’s visit to Colombo should help advance ties and resolve disputes.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s visit to Sri Lanka, (April 4-6), his first after 2019, demonstrated, beyond optics, the close ties between the two countries. Colombo, under the President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, is serious about improving relations with New Delhi

Syllabus: Mains – GS II (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

India and Sri Lanka share a multifaceted relationship, deeply rooted in historical, cultural, economic, and strategic ties. However, the bilateral relationship has faced challenges over political, economic, defense, cultural, and social issues.

Bilateral relations



Economic Relations

- India is one of Sri Lanka’s largest trading partners, with bilateral trade exceeding **\$5 billion** annually.
- India has extended significant financial support, including \$4 billion during Sri Lanka’s 2022 economic crisis, enabling the island nation to stabilize its economy.
- Key areas of cooperation include tourism, renewable energy, IT, and

infrastructure development. Recent agreements focus on integrating power grids and enhancing trade connectivity. Indian investments in sectors like hospitality (e.g., ITC Hotels) and renewable energy underscore economic interdependence

However, trade imbalances and controversies over Indian investments remain challenges.

Social Relations

- Social ties are underpinned by shared cultural and religious heritage. India has supported **Tamil rehabilitation efforts** by constructing 10,000 housing units in plantation areas.
- The Tamil ethnic issue remains a sensitive topic, with India advocating for equitable rights and social integration for Sri Lankan Tamils. People-to-people connections are fostered through educational exchanges and community development projects.
- Social harmony between Sinhalese and Tamil communities is critical for bilateral goodwill.

Cultural Relations

- India and Sri Lanka share a **2,500-year-old cultural bond rooted in Buddhism**.
- Initiatives like the \$15 million grant for Buddhist heritage preservation highlight India's commitment to deepening cultural ties.
- The Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Colombo promotes Indian art, music, yoga, and language.
- Collaborative efforts in archaeology and museum development further enhance cultural diplomacy.

Defense Relations

- Defense cooperation has grown significantly through joint military exercises like **Mitra Shakti** and agreements under the Colombo Security Conclave.
- A five-year defense pact signed during PM Modi's visit includes training for Sri Lankan military personnel and enhanced maritime security collaboration.
- Both nations share concerns about Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean region, underscoring the importance of coordinated security efforts. Defense ties aim to ensure regional stability while addressing mutual security challenges.

Key Issues Between India and Sri Lanka

1. Political Issues

- Tamil Ethnic Issue: The **Tamil ethnic conflict** in Sri Lanka has been a long-standing political concern for India. India has consistently advocated for the implementation of the

13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution to ensure devolution of powers to Tamil-majority regions.

2. Economic Issues

- **Trade Imbalances:** Sri Lanka faces challenges in exporting to India due to its limited industrial base and protected economy. This has resulted in trade imbalances that need to be addressed.
- **Geopolitical Balancing:** Sri Lanka's growing ties with China, including Chinese investments in infrastructure projects like the **Hambantota Port**, have raised concerns in India about China's
- Strategic influences are need to be addressed.
- **Debt Crisis:** Sri Lanka's heavy reliance on Chinese loans for infrastructure projects has contributed to its economic instability. India has stepped in with financial aid and debt restructuring agreements to assist Sri Lanka during its economic recovery.

3. Defense Issues

- **Maritime Security:** The Indian Ocean is a critical area for both countries. The presence of Chinese military vessels near Sri Lanka has heightened India's security concerns. Collaborative efforts under frameworks like the Colombo Security Conclave aim to enhance maritime security.
- **Fishermen Disputes:** The recurring issue of Indian fishermen being detained by Sri Lankan authorities for crossing maritime boundaries remains unresolved.

4. Cultural and Social Issues

- **Buddhist Heritage:** Shared Buddhist heritage forms a strong cultural link between the two nations. However, fostering deeper people-to-people connections remains an ongoing effort.
- **Social Integration:** Addressing the grievances of Tamil minorities in Sri Lanka is critical for ensuring social harmony and maintaining bilateral goodwill.

Key outcomes of recent event

- Inauguration of the Maho-Omanthai railway line renovated with Indian assistance.
- Launch of a solar power plant funded by India.
- Signing of seven agreements covering defense, energy, health, trade, and digital infrastructure.
- Discussions on resolving fishermen disputes and enhancing regional cooperation under BIMSTEC frameworks.
- Modi also visited culturally significant sites like the Jaya Sri Maha Bodhi temple in Anuradhapura, reinforcing civilizational ties between the two nations.