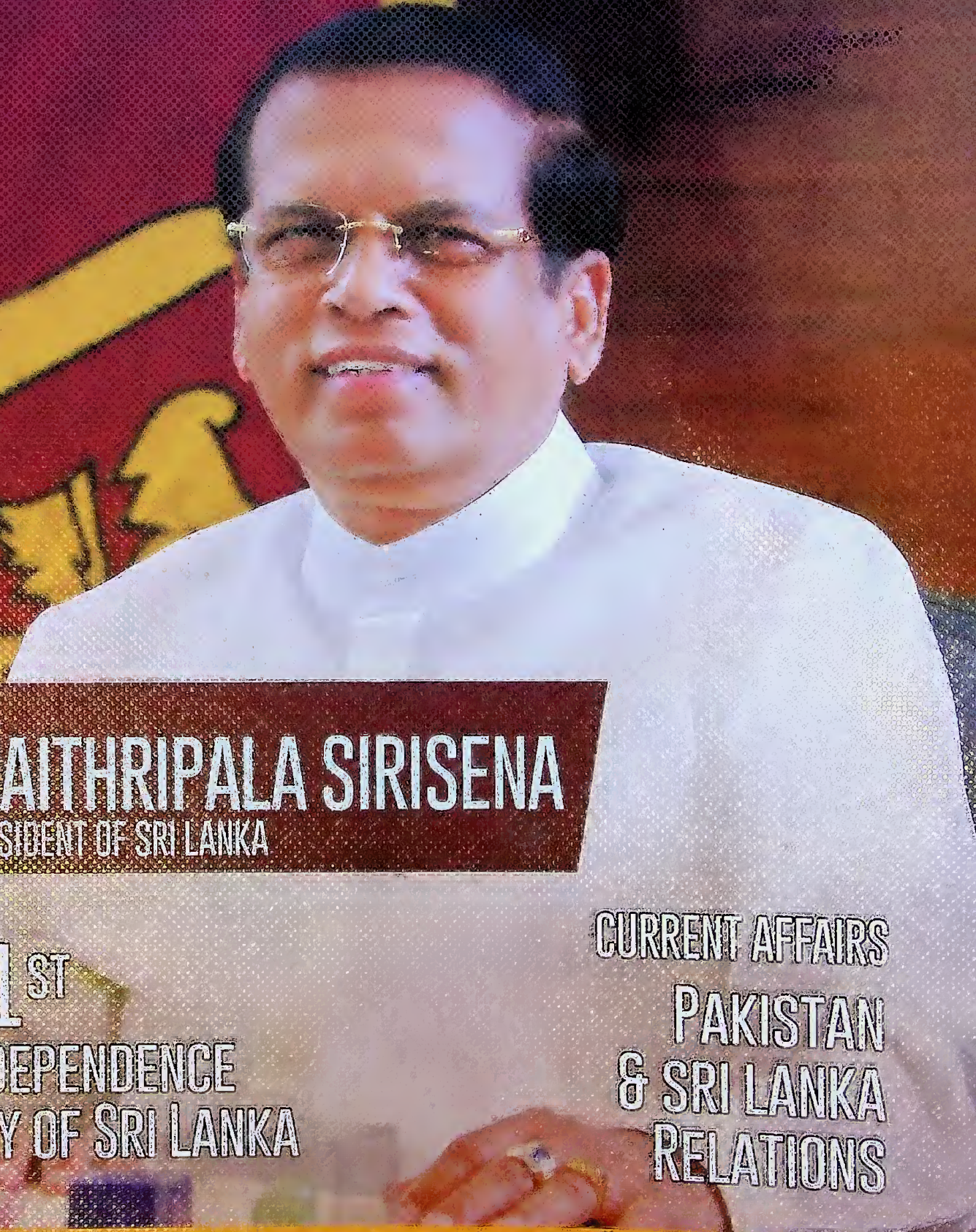


Monthly Magazine

VERTEX

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H.E.
MAITHRIPALA SIRISENA
PRESIDENT OF SRI LANKA

71ST
INDEPENDENCE
DAY OF SRI LANKA

CURRENT AFFAIRS
PAKISTAN
& SRI LANKA
RELATIONS

A MAGAZINE OF CULTURE & POLITICS

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INDEPENDENCE DAY MESSAGE



H.E. Maithripala Sirisena
President of Sri Lanka
February 04, 2019

Sri Lanka, which had been under the British rule for 133 years, gained independence on the 4th of February 1948. Each year, this day is celebrated with glory. Our prime objective should be to collectively commit ourselves to achieve the true meaning of the freedom we obtained with a new vision and renewed vigour.

Having gained independence from imperialist rulers, as a nation we expected a political, socio-economic and cultural forward march with a unique national identity, free of colonial shackles. To entrust the future of the nation to minds enslaved by imperialism for more than a century is more dangerous than being under the colonial rule itself.

Hence, for future progress, we need a people with spirits invigorated by national customs, values and culture.

We could accomplish colossal tasks, similar to those gigantic achievements of other great civilizations of the world in the past, by being independent. We are a people who established our own national identity from the beginning. Therefore, on this auspicious occasion, I would like to emphasize that time has come to build the economy of our country on the foundation of agriculture.

The common enemies of the progress of national revival are poverty and corruption. We must resolve to eradicate these evils completely. All those patriots who sacrificed their lives for the sake of independence of the nation since the colonial era are commemorated on this occasion with honour and dignity. All the service men and women dedicated to safeguard the freedom and independence of the nation today are also remembered with gratitude.

It is my wish on this important occasion that all political parties together with all of us will be able to march forward with courage and peace towards accomplishing the ultimate goals of independence.

INDEPENDENCE DAY MESSAGE

Celebrating 'independence' does not necessarily mean it has been entirely achieved. Its true meaning is realised only when all human beings in a nation achieve a state of environmental, economic, political, social and spiritual coexistence. This demands an organized program and collective sacrifice.

While celebrating our country's liberation from long years of foreign rule, 'Independence Day' is the ideal opportunity to inspire public discourse and social activism for a more broad based 'National Independence' that transcends ethnic and religious biases.

Since being propelled into power by the people, the 'Yahapalana' government has overcome countless challenges and obstacles to establish a refreshingly new social and political culture, while taking significant steps to strengthen democracy. We are savouring the positive results of these collective efforts, as this transformed society has already proven its resolve to defeat anti-democratic, extremist forces.

On our 71st National Independence Day, I invite each and every one of you to join me in building a robust economy, stable government and a prosperous nation, so that all our citizens can enjoy the true freedom of living in a socially and politically developed society.



Honorable Ranil Wickremesinghe
Prime Minister of Sri Lanka
Since 2018

PRESIDENT MAITHRIPALA SIRISENA

President Maithripala Sirisena assumed his term of office on January 9, 2015, after the Presidential Election held the previous day. He contested as the candidate of the Common Opposition. Maithripala Sirisena is the first member of the rural agricultural population to be elected as President of Sri Lanka, and hails from Polonnaruwa, where is located the second ancient capital of the country established in 1070 AD. Polonnaruwa remains a rural region largely populated by rice cultivators, and is the home of many irrigation reservoirs, historic places of Buddhist worship, and other monuments of the history of Sri Lanka, and the Ancient City of Polonnaruwa is a declared World Heritage Site. A person with no previous family links to politics, Pallewatte Gamaralalage Maithripala Yapa Sirisena comes with a long personal history in politics, especially as a representative of the rural people. The son of a middle-class farming family, whose father was a veteran of World War II, and cultivated five plus acres of paddy land in Polonnaruwa near the historic Parakrama Samudra. The son of Sinhalese Buddhist parents, Maithripala Sirisena was born on 3rd September 1951, and brought up as a Buddhist, with close association with the Buddhist temples.

Having received his primary education at Lakshauyana School, Polonnaruwa, he moved for secondary education to Topawawa Maha Vidyalaya, Polonnaruwa and finally Royal Central College Polonnaruwa. Having a keen interest in academic studies, and the agriculture that surrounded him in his home region, he excelled in aesthetic studies - especially singing, dancing, music and cultural activities. IN 1973 he obtained a Diploma in Agriculture from the Sri Lanka School of Agriculture at Kundasale, the premier center for agricultural training. His interests in political science later saw him obtain a Diploma in political Science from the Maxim Gorky Academy in Russia, in 1980.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

His work was well received by the World Health Organization (WHO) which awarded the "World No Tobacco Day Award 2013" for his determined action taken to stop tobacco smoking in the country. This is the first time a Sri Lankan was awarded with this honour. He also received "2013 Harvard Ministerial Leadership in Health Award" from Harvard School of Public Health & Kennedy School of Government, United States of America, in recognition of his commitment to innovative leadership in his tenure as Minister of Health, Sri Lanka. This is also the first time a Sri Lankan was awarded with this honour.

The leadership he rendered to the G15 Group of Countries at 2013 World Health Assembly in Geneva, where he presented the G15 Statement on health related issues to the Assembly was notable, and saw him elected as one of the four Vice-Presidents of the World Health Assembly 2014. He has also taken an important initiatives as the

Health Minister to ensure the approvals to purchase locally manufactured medicines directly to the Ministry of Health, thus empowering the local medicine manufacturers. As Minister of Health he also saw an important agreement between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh to establish the proper conditions for Sri Lanka to get quality medicines at good prices to help the needy people of the country.

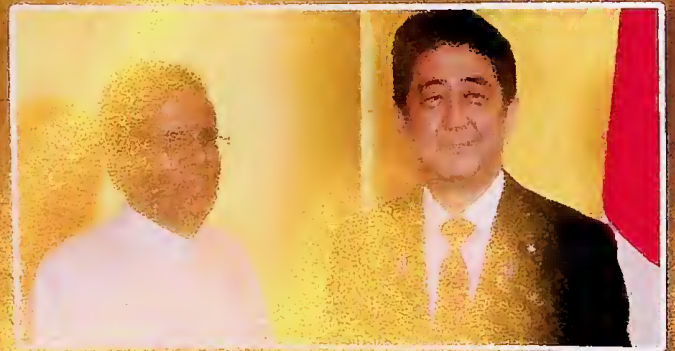
THE PRESIDENCY

He took a bold new step in his political life in November 2014, when he announced his agreement to be the Common Candidate of the Opposition, when the country's Executive President Mahinda Rajapaksa, decided to a call for a snap election, two years before the end of his second six year term, with the hop of being elected for a third term of six years, under a controversial amendment to the Constitution that had been passed removing the two term limit for the Presidency.

He campaigned to rescind this amendment to the Constitution, and for the restriction of the powers of the Executive Presidency, with more power sharing in a democratic manner and spirit among the Legislature, the Executive and the Judiciary, and to ensure a country free of corruption and assured of Good Governance. The theme of his campaign that brought him victory was "Maithri palanayak, sthawara ratak" (A rule with loving kindness, a stable country). The joint opposition alliance known as the National Democratic Front endorsed him as the Common Candidate for the Presidential election of January 8, 2015, when he won a clear victory and became the Sixth President of Sri Lanka.



PRESIDENT SRISENA WITH WORLD LEADERS



RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN



PRESIDENT SIRISENA HAS BEEN MAINTAINING A VERY CORDIAL RELATIONSHIP WITH PAKISTAN. SINCE HE ASSUMED DUTIES IN 2015, HE HAD VISITED PAKISTAN TWICE DURING HIS TENURE OF OFFICE.

He paid a state visit from 5th - 7th April 2015, within a period of 03 months after assuming office, which clearly indicates his affection towards Pakistan. During the wide-ranging discussions between President Maithripala Sirisena and then President Mamnoon Hussain, the two leaders reviewed political, economic, culture, education, consular, legal, defence and other spheres of engagement in the bilateral relationship. They also shared views on ways and means of intensifying bilateral collaboration to achieve the extraordinary excellence in the relations between the two countries.

The leaders appreciated the tremendous value of the wide-ranging partnership shared by the two countries. President Sirisena emphasized the need to build upon the longstanding connections between the two people which span thousands of years and which has progressively achieved a unique robustness in the post-independence era emerging from the time of Prime Minister Sririmavo Bandaranaike. The two leaders also discussed matters of mutual interest in regional and international era including SAARC.

The Sri Lankan President observed that at critical moments in the post-Independence histories, the two countries have stood by each other in solidarity. In this regard, he conveyed to the Pakistani leadership deep appreciation for the consistent support extended by Pakistan during the conflict in Sri Lanka and the fight against terrorism which he said reflected the abiding friendship between the two countries. President Sirisena also conveyed gratitude for the facilities and training provided to Sri Lankan Armed Forces personnel as well as the continuing support in the post-conflict development phase such as the grant of US\$ 1 million for IDP housing which would support the resettlement programme in Sri Lanka.

President Sirisena visited Pakistan again in 2018, to attend the Pakistan National Day celebrations as a Guest of Honour. During his visit he had discussions with the former President and Prime Minister of the country. It was agreed during the talks, to progress with renewed efforts to further enhance economic cooperation within the existing mechanisms of the Joint Economic Commission and the Working Groups on Trade in Goods, Investment, Auto sector, Customs cooperation. President Sirisena invited Pakistan investments to Sri Lanka particularly in the sectors of Pharmaceuticals and Medical devices, Cement, Sugar IT and Tourism. As an immediate step, Pakistan side agreed to send an Investment team to explore opportunities in the Pharmaceuticals, Cement and Sugar sectors. President Sirisena thanked Pakistan for the US \$ 200 million credit-line offered to Sri Lanka.

It was observed during the both leaders' meeting, that there is a rich ancient Buddhist heritage which exists in Pakistan and referred to its immense value to develop tourism between the two countries. Having agreed that Cultural cooperation is an area which has greater potential for engagement, President Sirisena proposed the establishment of a joint research and awareness programme which would generate wider appreciation of the ancient connections, bolster tourism and intensify people to people contact.





His Excellency

NOORDEEN MOHAMED SHAHEID

High Commissioner of Sri Lanka

WHAT DO YOU COMMENT ON PAK-SRI LANKA RELATIONS THROUGHOUT THE HISTORY OF BOTH COUNTRIES?

The relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka date back to the formative years of the two countries. The two countries laid the foundation of their friendship in 1948 when Prime Minister of Sri Lanka visited Pakistan. Pakistan-Sri Lanka enjoys very close and cordial bilateral relations with each other as both countries are in the South Asia region and also the members of SAARC. The relations are generally warm have gone into strong tie recently.



WHICH AREAS DO YOU SEE AS PROMISING REGARDING BILATERAL RELATIONS

Both the countries are working very closely with each other to enhance the existing bilateral relations in the areas such as trade and commerce, agriculture, investment, science and technology, health and joint ventures in investment etc.



ARE YOU SATISFIED WITH THE STATE OF ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONS BETWEEN SRI LANKA AND PAKISTAN

Yes, the trade and economic relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka are solid and longstanding. Pakistan is the second largest trading partner of Sri Lanka in the SAARC region. Sri Lanka was the first country to sign a Free Trade Agreement with Pakistan. A substantial growth is seen in bilateral trade, particularly after implementation of the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (PSFTA) in 2005.

WHAT IS THE CURRENT BALANCE OF TRADE BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES?

The value of total trade between the two countries has increased from US \$ 158 Million in 2005 to over US \$ 423 Million in 2017. The balance of trade (BOT) has always been in favor of Pakistan and the trade gap has increased at a considerable rate over the years.



WHAT IS THE POTENTIAL FIELDS FOR BILATERAL TRADE BETWEEN PAKISTAN AND SRI LANKA?

The potential field for bilateral trade between Pakistan and Sri Lanka include ceramic and porcelain products, perfumery and cosmetic products, herbal and ayurvedic products, electric and electronic products, rubber and rubber based products etc.

TELL US A BIT ABOUT SRI LANKA AS A TOURIST DESTINATION?

This year Sri Lanka has claimed the top spot in the world's leading travel guide, the Lonely Planet as the best travel destination for 2019. Travel Lemming Reader Awards has placed Sri Lanka as the #1 destination in Asia. And it's really not hard to understand why:

Imagine a tropical island filled with culture, history, wildlife, and incredible beaches. From leopard spotting to surfing to exploring thousand-year-old UNESCO World Heritage sites, there is something for every type of traveler in Sri Lanka. And with incredibly affordable prices, it's no wonder that tourism here has been skyrocketing lately.

HOW DO YOU SEE THE BUSINESS CLIMATE IN PAKISTAN?

Well, the potential is available to explore more in each other's market and there is a very interesting business climate prevails in Pakistan for Sri Lankan SMEs and other private companies.





in a
glimpse
photography



SRI LANKA HIGH COMMISSION IN ISLAMABAD

CELEBRATES THE 71ST INDEPENDENCE DAY OF SRI LANKA



Under the guidelines of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the High Commission of Sri Lanka in Islamabad took initiatives to conduct the “Sri Lankan week” programme parallel to the National Day Celebration, 2019 in Islamabad, Pakistan. In this regard, a series of activities were planned by this Mission focusing on bilateral trade between Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Special attention was focused to promote “Sri Lankan tourism” and “Ceylon tea and Cinnamon” in Pakistan during the week-long event.

A food festival was held in collaboration with Serena – Islamabad Hotel and Galadari Hotel - Colombo on 02nd and 03rd February 2019, in Serena Hotel. Sri Lankan Chefs with vast experience in Sri Lankan culinary from Galadari Hotel also participated at this event. At the press conference held to inaugurate the food festival, High Commissioner stated that it was an excellent opportunity for Pakistani people to taste the Sri Lankan authentic cuisines in Islamabad and invited Pakistanis to visit Sri Lanka to enjoy the hospitality of Sri Lankan people and see the beautiful places in Sri Lanka. During the event, Sri Lankan traditional dances were performed by the Sri Lankan Army cultural troupe at the Zamana Restaurant of the Serena Hotel. Former Foreign Secretary of Pakistan Mr. Jäilil Abbasi Jilani and HE Mr. Ahmed Säheen High Commissioner for Maldives in Pakistan together with their spouses graced the occasion as special guests.

On 04th February 2019, the High Commission celebrated the 71st Independence Day of Sri Lanka at the High Commission premises, with traditional fervor and enthusiasm. More than hundred SriLankans living in an around Pakistan including religious leaders, tri forcers, and students participated at this event.

The celebration began with the hoisting of National Flag by the High Commissioner H.E. Mr. Noordeen Mohamed Shaheid followed by National Anthem. Consequent to the lighting of oil lamp by the dignitaries, two minutes silence was observed for the National War Heroes as a mark of respect for the sacrifices made by them to achieve peace and for the safeguard of independence and to protect sovereignty of the motherland. This was followed by the religious observance performed by religious leaders representing the Buddhist, Hindu, Christianity and Islam invoking blessings on Sri Lanka and the Sri Lankan people. The special messages issued by the President, the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister of Sri Lanka were read out in all three languages. Speaking at the gathering, High Commissioner conveyed his best wishes on the auspicious occasion to all Sri Lankans and reiterated the importance of unity amongst the people of the country regardless of race, religion, language and ethnicity. He further praised the President and the Government of Sri Lanka for their unstinted commitment to ensure good governance, transparency, accountability and promotion of pluralism. At the end of the ceremony the visitors were served with Sri Lankan tea and the traditional kiribath, kavum and other Lankan sweets.

In the evening of 05 February, a formal reception was held with the presentation of a cultural show performed by a group of 14 members from the Sri Lanka Army dance troupe. A gathering of 600 people, comprising of around 200 diplomats of friendly countries, Ministers, members of Chambers of Commerce, members of Sri Lankan community living in Pakistan and dignitaries enjoyed a truly Sri Lankan event followed by dinner.

High Commissioner, in his speech stated that political, trade, defence and economic relations between Pakistan and Sri Lanka have remained solid since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1948.

Pakistan is the second largest trading partner of Sri Lanka in the SAARC region and Sri Lanka and Pakistan are like two brothers in the South Indian Region. Sri Lanka was the first country to sign a Free Trade Agreement with Pakistan in 2005. A remarkable progress has been witnessed in bilateral trade between the two countries particularly after implementation of the said Pakistan-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement (PSFTA). Pakistan and Sri Lanka are determined to boost the bilateral trade to reach at US\$ 1 billion mark during the upcoming period of one year. At the end of the event, the participants were presented with Sri Lankan Tea from "Sri Lanka Tea Board".

The High Commissioner further emphasized that in order to further strengthen the bilateral relationship, Sri Lanka and Pakistan should look at new areas and avenues which engage the people of the two countries such as tourism, education and religious connectivity. Despite all the plus points, there is serious lack of publicity given to such initiatives and lack of awareness amongst the general public. In this context, the High Commissioner congratulated the initiatives of the new Government of Pakistan that has taken impressive strides in liberalizing visa regime and declaring that Pakistan is now a heaven for trade, investment and tourism. The high Commissioner at the end of his speech proudly declared year 2019 as "Ceylon Tea promotion year" in Pakistan.

Former Foreign Secretary Mr. Jalil Abbassi Jilani and former High Commissioner of Pakistan in Sri Lanka Mr. Bashir Wali Mohamed participated as Special Guests at the Independence Day celebrations on the invitation of the High Commission and were honoured for the unstinted support given by them during and post conflict period in Sri Lanka.

Ms. Saroja Sirisena, Director General of the Economics Affairs Division of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs took part in the Independence Day celebrations as a Special Guest. The High Commission arranged meetings for the visiting Director General with government officials and business community of Pakistan. She met Mr. Imtiaz Ahmed, the Special Secretary for Asia of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Pakistan and discussed various bilateral issues at the said meeting. Further, Ms. Saroja had a very cordial



meeting with members of Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and businessmen at which former discussed with participants the trade and investment opportunities available in Sri Lanka. The economic promotion event of Sri Lankan High Commission received a full coverage by all print and electronic media of Pakistan. During the discussion with the members of Chamber of Commerce and CEOs of Supermarkets in Pakistan, a great deal of interest was shown with regard to the promotion of "Ceylon tea" in Pakistan. Ms. Saroja Sirisena also visited Taxila, a prominent Buddhist Heritage site in Pakistan which has relevance to Gandara civilization.



The Mission further held a public seminar on 06th February 2019 on "Sri Lanka - Pakistan Relations" followed by Sri Lankan cultural programme in collaboration with Centre for Global and Strategic Studies (CGSS), a leading think tank in Pakistan. The event was presided over by Lt. Gen (R) Zahir Ul Islam, Chairman, CGSS. Hon. Mahbob Sultan, Federal Minister for Food Security and Research graced the event as the Chief Guest. During his remarks at the gathering, he said that Pakistan and Sri Lankan relationship is embedded in 2500 year old Buddhist and Gandhara Civilization. "Both countries have supported each other in thick and thin and future of both seems brighter and exciting with shared common objectives".



Mrs. Saroja Sirisena, Director General - Economic Affairs and spokesperson of the MFA Sri Lanka was invited as the Guest Speaker at the said conference. She spoke about the warmth relationship that had existed over seven decades from the Independence of both countries. Maj. Gen (R) Shakeel Hussain, former High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka also participated as one of the panelists at the conference and spoke about security and economic aspects of Pakistan - Sri Lanka relations. Further he mentioned "the current dynamics of the shifting of the power centres places much focus of international community on Asia".



High Commissioner, Mr. Noordeen Mohamed Shaheed also spoke at the forum and he reiterated the need for expansion of the volume of trade between both the countries as there appears to be a huge potential for enhancement of bilateral trade. Further he announced that the year 2019 has been dedicated by the Mission for the promotion of "Ceylon tea" in Pakistan.



More than 600 participants from all walks of life participated at the seminar. The efforts of the High Commission in strengthening the bilateral relations between Sri Lanka and Pakistan were highly appreciated by the other speakers at the forum.



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