

WITH REVIEW OF PASSING OUT PARADE AT IMA DEHRADUN, COMMANDER OF SRI LANKA ARMY RECONNECTS WITH ALMA MATER

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Lieutenant General BKGM Lasantha Rodrigo, Commander of the Sri Lanka Army, concluded a meaningful four-day official visit to India from 11th to 14th June 2025, reinforcing the longstanding and robust military ties between the two Armies.

In a powerful homecoming, Lieutenant General Rodrigo revisited the Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun, where he was commissioned in December 1990 as part of the 87th Course. Now the Commander of his nation's Army, he returned as the Reviewing Officer for the Passing Out Parade, witnessing the commissioning of a new generation of officers including foreign cadets from Sri Lanka.

The event was deeply symbolic, with two Sri Lankan officer cadets, including RMNL Rathnayake, son of Brigadier RMSP Rathnayake, passing out as commissioned officers. Their commissioning brings the total number of Sri Lankan Army officers commissioned from IMA to 296, highlighting India's continued role in shaping the leadership of friendly foreign forces.

During his address to the cadets, the General officer expressed deep honour in reviewing the Passing Out Parade at IMA, calling it a profoundly emotional homecoming. Reflecting on his own journey, he reminded the cadets that commissioning into the armed forces is not just about earning a rank, but embracing a lifelong way of service, responsibility, and leadership. Emphasising that respect is earned through daily conduct, he invoked the IMA Credo - duty to Nation, Soldiers, and Families of bravehearts - and highlighted the enduring values of discipline, integrity, loyalty, and honour. He urged the cadets to wear the uniform with pride and purpose, recognising them as part of an unbroken chain of patriots. He lauded award winners and acknowledged foreign cadets as ambassadors of IMA's ethos, reinforcing that its values transcend borders. He also called upon the young officers to lead with wisdom, uphold justice, and contribute fearlessly to the legacy of IMA, invoking Field Marshal Manekshaw's enduring words: "Be truthful, be honest, be fearless."

During his visit, Lieutenant General Rodrigo held detailed discussions with senior leadership of the Indian Army, including Vice Chief of Army Staff, Lieutenant General NS Raja Subramani and GOC-in-C, South Western Command, Lieutenant General Manjinder Singh focusing on enhancing professional military cooperation, joint training, and regional security frameworks.

India and Sri Lanka conducts bilateral exercise "Mitra Shakti", the flagship Army-level counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism training initiative between the two nations. The 10th edition of the exercise was held in Sri Lanka in August 2024, and it continues to serve as a cornerstone for operational synergy and trust-building between the Armies.

At any given time, approximately 700 Sri Lankan Army personnel are undergoing training at various Indian Army establishments, making Sri Lanka Army the largest foreign participant in Indian military training programmes. These include prestigious institutions such as the Defence Services Staff College, Infantry School, Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School, Army Air Defence College, School of Artillery, Armoured Corps Centre and School, Mechanised Infantry Centre and School; and the Indian Military Academy itself. This training collaboration not only builds professional competence but also deepens interpersonal and institutional bonds between the two Armies.

Lieutenant General Rodrigo's visit continues a tradition of regular Army-to-Army engagements between the two nations. Former Indian Army Chiefs have visited Sri Lanka for key bilateral events, including past

editions of Exercise Mitra Shakti and high-level defence dialogues. Likewise, successive Sri Lankan Army Commanders have made official visits to India, cementing defence diplomacy through structured cooperation and shared training ethos.

The Commander's visit symbolised more than a routine military engagement. It was a celebration of shared values, mutual trust, and enduring friendship. From reviewing the parade at IMA to holding strategic discussions in Delhi and Jaipur, the visit reflected the Indian Army's pivotal role in building strong defence ties across the Indian Ocean region.





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