



Secure sea lanes and freedom of navigation are pivotal for collective security & prosperity of Indian Ocean Region, says Raksha Mantri at Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence

“India and Sri Lanka, as close maritime partners, are well positioned to jointly safeguard peace, security & stability across IOR”

“As true Vishwa Mitra, India is committed to playing a constructive and dependable role in its shared neighbourhood”

Posted On: 09 SEP 2026 6:13PM by PIB Delhi

“Secure sea lanes, freedom of navigation, respect for international law and unhindered maritime trade are pivotal for collective security & prosperity of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR),” stated Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh as he called for enhanced cooperation between India and Sri Lanka to shape a favourable and secure maritime environment and tackle emerging maritime challenges before they evolve into serious threats to developmental interests and brighter future. He was addressing a gathering comprising Sri Lankan Deputy Minister of Defence Mr Aruna Jayasekara, Commanders of the Sri Lankan Army, Navy & Air Force, and other senior officials during his visit to the country’s Ministry of Defence in Colombo on September 09, 2026.

Raksha Mantri asserted that national security and economic growth cannot be viewed in isolation as they are intrinsically linked to geography and security, emphasising that neither country can afford to remain indifferent to the developments in the region. He stated that while India and Sri Lanka have upgraded their capabilities through a series of measures ranging from capacity building to joint exercises, there is a need to further strengthen the longstanding India-Sri Lanka defence and strategic partnership with special emphasis on maritime cooperation.



“We need to devise & implement joint protocols, sharpen the skills and share experiences to deal with emerging threats arising from the rapidly evolving global and regional dynamics. It needs to be a continuous process. We must develop new paradigms for a closer and stronger maritime partnership, which is the basis of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi’s vision of MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions). ‘Mutual’ and ‘Holistic’ underscore the importance of synergy, cooperation and collaboration,” stated Shri Rajnath Singh.

Raksha Mantri stated that India and Sri Lanka are bound by the shared ocean, and maritime security is not a matter of abstract theory but a reality that shapes their trade, security and destinies. “Sri Lanka is a friendly neighbour, longstanding friend and reliable partner for India. Both nations are central to any strategic discourse on maritime security in the region. Strong India-Sri Lanka maritime cooperation will be mutually beneficial and vital for collective growth and security,” he said.

Shri Rajnath Singh highlighted the significant progress achieved in bilateral maritime cooperation, particularly in Search & Rescue Operations that have saved numerous precious lives at sea. He added that both nations have been working together in the fields of counter-narcotics, anti-piracy and human trafficking. “In this regard, our mutual association in Colombo Security Conclave which focuses on maritime safety, counter-terrorism, cyber security and organised crime becomes more relevant than ever before,” he said.

Raksha Mantri described the commissioning of the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre, established through the collaboration between the two countries, as an excellent example of their shared commitment towards keeping the waters of the Indian Ocean safe and secure. “India stands ready to join hands with Sri Lanka in areas such as capacity building and joint exercises, enabling both sides to learn from each other’s experiences and fine-tune protocols for the effective implementation of joint initiatives. We’re committed to assisting Sri Lanka in every possible way to further strengthen such cooperation,” he said.



Shri Rajnath Singh envisaged a future where India and Sri Lanka emerge as joint stakeholders in developing a mutually beneficial and integrated Maritime Domain Awareness system, providing comprehensive maritime information on a real-time basis. “This would entail systematic cooperation and interaction amongst concerned agencies, navies and coast guards of the two countries with a view to addressing the challenges of illegal fishing, suspicious vessels tracking, narcotics trafficking, smuggling, terrorism and other security threats,” he said.

Referring to the challenges faced by our fishermen, Raksha Mantri underscored that the issue needs to be addressed together. He observed that maritime cooperation should extend beyond the security framework to also cover areas like aquaculture, marine biotechnology, ocean science, protection and preservation of maritime environment and maritime tourism. He also suggested that the two countries can explore the establishment of a joint Maritime Humanitarian Assistance & Disaster Relief (HADR) system involving relevant agencies for a coordinated and rapid response to natural calamities and man-made disasters.

Shri Rajnath Singh asserted that as the Indian Ocean enters a period of profound strategic and economic transformation, India and Sri Lanka must synergise their efforts, build upon their collective competencies and address emerging challenges together. “The tectonic shifts and rapid transformation underway present both challenges and opportunities. The two countries must leverage their longstanding maritime partnership to turn these opportunities into shared growth,” he said.

Raksha Mantri noted that the future of India-Sri Lanka relations should be anchored in the simple premise that proximity creates interdependence, which in turn creates immense opportunities for shared evolution. Describing India as a true Vishwa Mitra, or trusted global friend, he reiterated India’s commitment to playing a constructive and dependable role in its shared neighbourhood. Holistic maritime security and mutual prosperity are two sides of the same coin, he said. He expressed confidence that India and Sri Lanka, as close maritime partners, are well positioned to jointly safeguard peace, security and stability across the IOR.

High Commissioner of India to Sri Lanka Shri Santosh Jha and other senior officials were present on the occasion.



Upon his arrival at the Ministry of Defence, Shri Rajnath Singh was accorded a Guard of Honour. He also laid a wreath at the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) Memorial in Battaramulla and paid homage to the bravehearts who made the supreme sacrifice in the line of duty.





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(Release ID: 2308395) Visitor Counter : 917

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