Mahatma Gandhi called India, Sri Lanka’s “nearest neighbour”. It is through that prism that we see our ties with this island nation.

June 12

Mahinda Rajapaksa’s visit to India fruitful with a number of agreements signed to strengthen and expand bilateral co-operation.

For three decades, the Tamil question dominated the ties between India and Sri Lanka. With the elimination of LTTE the relations can be reformulated on new lines. Willingness for co-operation is evident from the agreement to open an Indian consulate in the southern city of Hambantota.

The immediate issue has been resettlement of the Tamils displaced during the Elam war.

October 2010

Rajapaksa was invited as the chief guest of the CWG closing ceremony. India discussed the issue of Tamil re-settlement with him. At present, Rajpaksa enjoys two-thirds support in the Parliament. He has passed a constitutional amendment removing the bar from him to contest for President for more than two terms. With such a majority, it is the best time for him to address the Tamil issue. One of the ways of reconciliation is to grant greater autonomy to the Tamil speaking regions of Sri Lanka.

## Territorial Issues

* Killing of Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan waters
* Kachchatheevu Island
  + The island was given to Sri Lanka by India in 1974
  + Tamil Nadu government has been demanding the annulment of this ceding

## Economy

* India is Sri Lanka’s largest trade partner overall
* The overall trade turnover grew five times within eight years since the entry into force in 2000 of the bilateral FTA.

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* India now has 4 missions in Sri Lanka
  + The consulates at Jaffna and Hambantota were opened in 2010.
* July 2011: India-Lanka begin work on the **Kankasanthurai** port
  + This was a port near Jaffna that was earlier partly controlled by LTTE

Energy Cooperation

* We want to sell them electricity

# Background

* Mahatma Gandhi called Sri Lanka ‘India’s closest neighbour’
* More than 2500 years old relationship
  + Intellectual, cultural, religious and linguistic intercourse
* Growing contacts at the highest political level, growing trade and investment, cooperation in the fields of development, education, culture and defence, as well as a broad understanding on major issues of international interest.

# Major Outstanding issues

* Tamil resettlement issue
* Killing of Indian fishermen

Table

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Opportunities | Challenges |
| After the Eelam war Sri Lanka is looking at its development. India can be a partner in development. |  |
| The mechanism for Joint Commission has been revived |  |

Table

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Positives | Negatives |
| 1. End of the Eelam War has provided opportunity to both the countries to expand their relationship in the new areas. |  |
| 1. Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance on Criminal Matters and Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Prisoners. |  |
| 1. The recent announcement of Sri Lanka to lift the emergency regulations can further boost the ties |  |
| 1. NTPC, Ceylon Electricity Board to set up 500 MW power plant at Sampur in Sri Lanka. This is NTPCs first overseas venture |  |