

# In Lanka, Jaishankar reviews status of India-backed projects

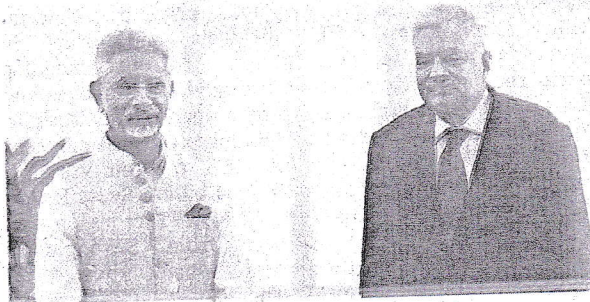
**OUTREACH.** Holds talks with Lankan leadership, key politicians in ruling, Opposition camps

Meera Srinivasan

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Thursday undertook a day-long visit to Colombo and discussed progress on key energy sector initiatives that India and Sri Lanka have agreed to jointly undertake. Participating in a ceremony with President Ranil Wickremesinghe, he commissioned a Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) and handed over new homes built with Indian assistance.

In his first bilateral visit abroad after being re-appointed to the post in the newly installed coalition government, Jaishankar focused mostly on progress made in the implementation of ongoing India-backed projects across the island nation, sources said, in addition to meeting the Sri Lankan leadership, and senior politicians from the ruling and opposition camp.

"Significant attention was given to plans for an LNG supply, a proposed petroleum pipeline linking the two coun-



**STRENGTHENING TIES.** External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar meets with Sri Lanka President Ranil Wickremesinghe in Colombo on Thursday ANI

tries and advancing oil and gas exploration projects. Additionally, it was announced that construction of the Sampur Solar Power Plant is set to commence in July 2024," Wickremesinghe's office said, following his one-on-one meeting with Jaishankar. They also discussed ways of enhancing efficiency of India-backed projects aimed at bolstering Sri Lanka's liquid milk industry and fertilizer production.

Talks covered projects under India's support for developing Trincomalee and expanding the Kankesanthurai

port, the statement said.

## MARITIME SECURITY

Terming the launch of the MRCC a "highlight", the President's office said it comprised a main centre at the Colombo Naval Headquarters, a sub-centre in the southern Hambantota district and unmanned installations in strategic locations across Sri Lanka's coastline. "This initiative underscores the deepening maritime security cooperation between India and Sri Lanka," Wickremesinghe's office said in a statement. Maritime se-

curity has been a recurring theme in India's engagement with neighbouring countries and is also a stated priority for the Colombo Security Conclave, an initiative that brings together India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Mauritius, along with Bangladesh and the Seychelles as observers. The move for the Coordination Centre coincides with Sri Lanka's ongoing moratorium on foreign research vessels, after India raised concern over the docking of Chinese research vessels at Sri Lankan ports.

In addition to a short review meeting with his counterpart Ali Sabry, Jaishankar called on Prime Minister Dinesh Gunawardena. He held talks with Leader of Opposition Sajith Premadasa, along with leaders representing the Muslim and hill country Tamil community, who are part of the Opposition alliance. Jaishankar also met former President Mahinda Rajapaksa.

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