

The High Commission of Sri Lanka in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan

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Pakistan and Sri Lanka Leaders Agree to Boost Bilateral Ties

Pakistan and Sri Lanka agreed on expanding its relationship from defence cooperation to an "overall comprehensive engagement" involving trade, communications and culture.

President Zardari in a one-on-one meeting with his Sri Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa at the Presidential Secretariat overlooking the Indian ocean, held extensive talks on bilateral, regional and global issues on 28 November 2010. During the exclusive meeting that lasted for one hour, the two Presidents agreed on taking the existing level of Pak-Sri Lankan relationship to "new heights", encompassing a multi-sectoral engagement in addition to defence, that had been a major sector of collaboration between Pakistan and Sri Lanka in the past.



Also they discussed the Pakistan-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement which was already in place with high potential of increasing it manifold. The two sides held threadbare discussions to make it more effective and added that it could lead to the inking of a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement. Pakistan President stated that Sri Lanka is an important country of the region and important member of SAARC and this was a major reason of high level contacts between the two countries.

Zardari favours barter trade with Sri Lanka



Pakistan and Sri Lanka should boost bilateral trade and economic cooperation through barter trade and currency exchange, President Asif Ali Zardari said, during his visit to Sri Lanka. When the President met with the Sri Lankan Parliamentarians, he said that he wants a new and unconventional phase of economic cooperation between both the nations.

Addressing the members of Sri Lanka-Pakistan Parliamentary Friendship Association - a 30 member multiparty caucus from both the countries established in 2007, here at the Parliament House the President said the two countries need to go for a win-win situation for both. He said by going for barter trade, the two countries do not have to pay each other in dollars, lessening the pressure on their foreign exchange reserves. "If you have anything in abundance we can trade. We have abundance of cement, you have tea and other commodities that we can exchange."

"We want to be friends forever," President Zardari told the Parliamentarians.

President Zardari said "unlike the investors who come and take back their money, Pakistan is offering a win-win relation as it is the only way that is acceptable to both the sides".

During the visit to Sri Lanka, the President was accompanied with high level business delegation, in addition to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Defence and State Minister for Investments. The President also visited the Sri Lanka's biggest ready made garment factory namely Bandex in Colombo.



Pakistan to waive off visa conditions for Sri Lanka, restore PIA flights

Pakistan will waive off the requirements for official and diplomatic visas with Sri Lanka and restore the flights of national air carrier to Colombo, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi said, after his visit to Sri Lanka with the President of Pakistan.

He further mentioned that ending of visa conditions and the restoration of suspended PIA flights to and from Colombo from March 2011, showed the two countries' goodwill to increase connectivity for their mutual benefit. He mentioned that currently only the Sri Lankan Airlines would enhance people to people and business contacts.

Presently only the Sri Lankan Airlines is flying to Karachi three days a week and Sri Lankan Airlines is scheduled to start new flights from first quarter of 2011 to Lahore, to boost bilateral trade and tourism.



President Mahinda Rajapaksa was sworn for his second term at a colorful ceremony in Colombo on 19 November 2010



President Mahinda Rajapaksa was elected as a President of Sri Lanka in the January 26, 2010 presidential election. President Rajapaksa was sworn for his second term on 19 November 2010.

President Rajapaksa mentioned that he will guide the country in the right direction, especially in the economic development so that Sri Lanka would become a knowledge hub, financial hub and technology hub of the South Asia.

He appealed to all Sri Lankans to join him without political differences to help him in his development drive for economic prosperity.

He also promised the people of Sri Lanka that after defeating the separatists terrorism, now the whole nation should contribute to develop the motherland as a proud country of the World.

Ms. Seema Illahi Baloch, the newly appointed High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka presented her Credentials on 5 November 2010



Ms. Seema Illahi Baloch is a career diplomat of Pakistan Foreign Service and presented her Credentials to the President of Sri Lanka on 5 November 2010. She joined the Foreign Service in 1977, had held important appointments such as Director General, Director and Deputy Chief of Protocol in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Pakistan.

In addition to Urdu and English, she is fluent in French Language. She has obtained her Master's Degree from Harvard University in Economic

Development and International Economics in 1990. Also she has worked as a Consultant to the World Bank. Ms Baloch holds the distinction of being the second most senior Ambassador out of the fourteen Lady Ambassadors in the Pakistan Foreign Service.

The Pakistan Foreign Service holds her in high esteem as an intellectual, specialized in English Literature and Economic Development areas.



Kataragama- a Place of Worship for All Faiths

Domain of benevolent god Skanda held in awe & visited by Buddhists, Hindus & Muslims

Distance from Colombo: Kataragama is located 283km from Colombo.

Location

19km inland from Tissamaharama lies the small & remote town of Kataragama. Kataragama is one of most popular & most sacred pilgrimages sites of Sri Lanka. Like Adam's Peak, it attracts Sinhalese Buddhists as well as Hindu Tamils. The adored site is visited by Muslims & Christians too.

Town

Kataragama is a small town with clean, tree lined roads with rows of stalls selling garlands & platters of fruit-coconut, mango watermelon. The city, town & the wide shady roads are developed by the late president- ever industrious workhorse-indomitable R. A. Premadasa.

The best time to visit

The town is at its best bold, bright & busiest during the Kataragama festival, held around the Kandy Esala Perahera pageant in Kandy - two weeks in July & August.

The Journey

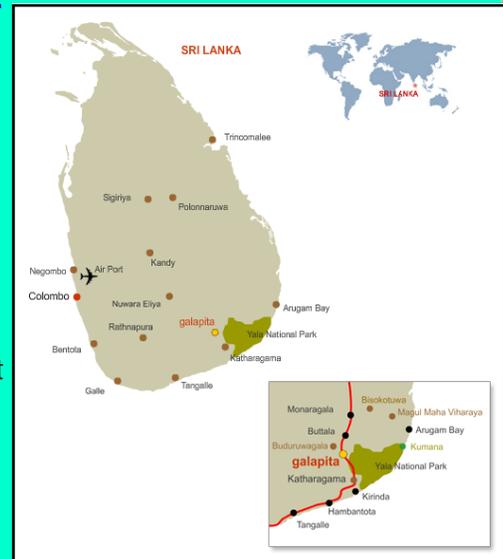
Kataragama is easily visited as a day-trip from Tissamaharama. A night's stay at Kataragama provide the opportunity of enjoying the sight of the puja (ritual offerings) in a leisurely manner, you may also imbibe some of the town's backwater charm & laid-back rural pace.

The setting

Kataragama town spreads out over a small grid of tranquil, leafy streets. The town is separated by the River Menik Ganga ("Gem River") with Sacred Precinct to the north, an area of beautiful parkland overrun by a grey langurs.

The popular river at Kataragama, Menik Ganga (River of Gems)

A short walk from the car park takes us to popular river Menik Ganga ("River of Gems"). We cross the bridge & then steps lead us down to the river which is quite shallow in places. It's a nice & easy river for a leisurely bath(village style) anytime during the day. The area around the river is very attractive with large trees on the banks providing plenty of shade. Pilgrims enjoy their ritual bath in the middle of the river. We cross the bridge to enter the main temple complex. The 300m wide avenue lined with trees leads us to the Hindu temple.





The legend & the history

According to the legend, victorious King Dutugamunu (161-137 BC) built the original shrine following his series of long battles against the mighty forces of Dravidian invader, Elara, at Anuradhapura. The legend is God Kataragama helped King Dutugamunu's formidable Sinhalese army to cross the River Menik, which would have been an unassailable mighty river a couple of millennium ago.

The history is (Mahawamsa) King Dutugamunu's army was commanded by ten mighty warriors, Nandhimitta, Suranimala, Mahasona, Gothaimbara, Theraputtabhaya (formerly a Buddhist monk, he gave up the Buddhist order for the sole purpose of saving the Sinhalese and Buddhism from the marauding Dravidian invaders), Bharana, Velusumana, Khanjadeva, Phussadeva & Labhiyavasaba, all of them of superhuman strength & courage sans Achilles heel.

Those ten mighty ambidextrous warriors of great strength & courage were ably assisted by great battle elephants. Foremost in strength, beauty, shape and the qualities of courage and swiftness and of mighty size of body was the royal elephant Kandula, who broke open the mighty door of impregnable Dravidian fortress at Vijithapura (city of victory), Anuradhapura.



The sacred pilgrimage site of the benevolent god

To Buddhists, this forest sanctuary is where the Buddha planted a sapling of the Sacred Sri Maha Bodhi tree of Anuradhapura, sanctifying the spot. For Hindus, Kataragama is the domain of the Hindu war god Skanda. Both Hindu & Buddhist communities believe that Hindu war god Kataragama (Skanda) has the power to intervene benevolently in their affairs and thousands, convinced of the deity's benign influence, journey, to Kataragama for a puja (offering) at the time of embarking on a new venture.

But then again it is said "the god help those who help themselves" you better have the moral courage and will to realize your dreams. Those who have the will would find a way. May God also go with those who toil in the High Noon for a Few Dollars More without the lady-luck of McCanna's Gold. And may the adored, benevolent God have mercy on all those Good, Bad and Ugly too.

Rosen Renaissance Hotel

Detagamuwa, on the Tissamaharama (Tissa) road 2km out of the town. A smart & stylish hotel with fifty a/c rooms come with all modcons including satellite TV, there is also a gym, coffee shop, games room and three swimming pools with underwater music.



THE HIGH COMMISSIONER
AND THE STAFF OF
SRI LANKA HIGH COMMISSION
IN PAKISTAN
WISH YOU ALL

A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS New Year - 2011