

Integrated Country Strategy

For Sri Lanka Diplomatic Missions in India - 2021/2023

Part V

MILINDA MORAGODA
High Commissioner to India

Mission Objective 5.3: Mark the 80th anniversary of the establishment of official relations between Sri Lanka and India, the centenary of the first visit of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore to Sri Lanka and the 75th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between the two countries, by organising appropriate activities:

The year 2022 marks the 80th anniversary of the appointment of Sir D. B. Jayatilaka as the first representative of the then Government of Ceylon, and the country's first step towards initiating formal bilateral relations with India. His appointment also symbolizes the inception of the building of the foundation for exchange of diplomatic agents between the two countries (which then were under the British dominion), and is, thus, a significant milestone in Indo-Sri Lanka relations. Commemorating 80 years of bilateral relations between India and Sri Lanka provides a unique opportunity for both countries to reiterate their age-old connections, and to embark on a pragmatic reassessment of, and strengthen current bilateral relations. The year 2022 also marks the centenary of the first visit of Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore to Sri Lanka, while 2023 marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between Sri Lanka and India.

- Key Tasks for Implementation**
- (1) Issuance of a commemorative stamp.
 - (2) Issuance of a commemorative coin to mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of formal diplomatic relations.
 - (3) Release of joint publications.
 - (4) Enhancing public awareness of the importance of this milestone anniversary.
 - (5) High-level dialogues between Sri Lanka and India and efforts to highlight the occasion, at every possible level.
 - (6) Facilitating the commemorative event to be held at the Vidyalankara Pirivena on November 01, 2022, with the possible participation of high-level dignitaries from India.
 - (7) Conducting of conferences/symposia on the evolution of relations between Sri Lanka and India.

Mission Objective 5.4: Utilize social media platforms effectively to promote Sri Lanka and project a positive image in India:

Effective use of social media platforms, particularly Twitter and Facebook which have wide outreach amongst the educated Indian masses, to promote Sri Lanka in India, is of paramount importance. Sri Lanka Diplomatic Representations in India should endeavour to constantly use these two social media platforms to promote Sri Lanka as a prime tourist and investment destination. The platforms can also be used for proactive dissemination of vital information on Sri Lanka, as well as to counter any disinformation by vested interests that are inimical to the image of the country.

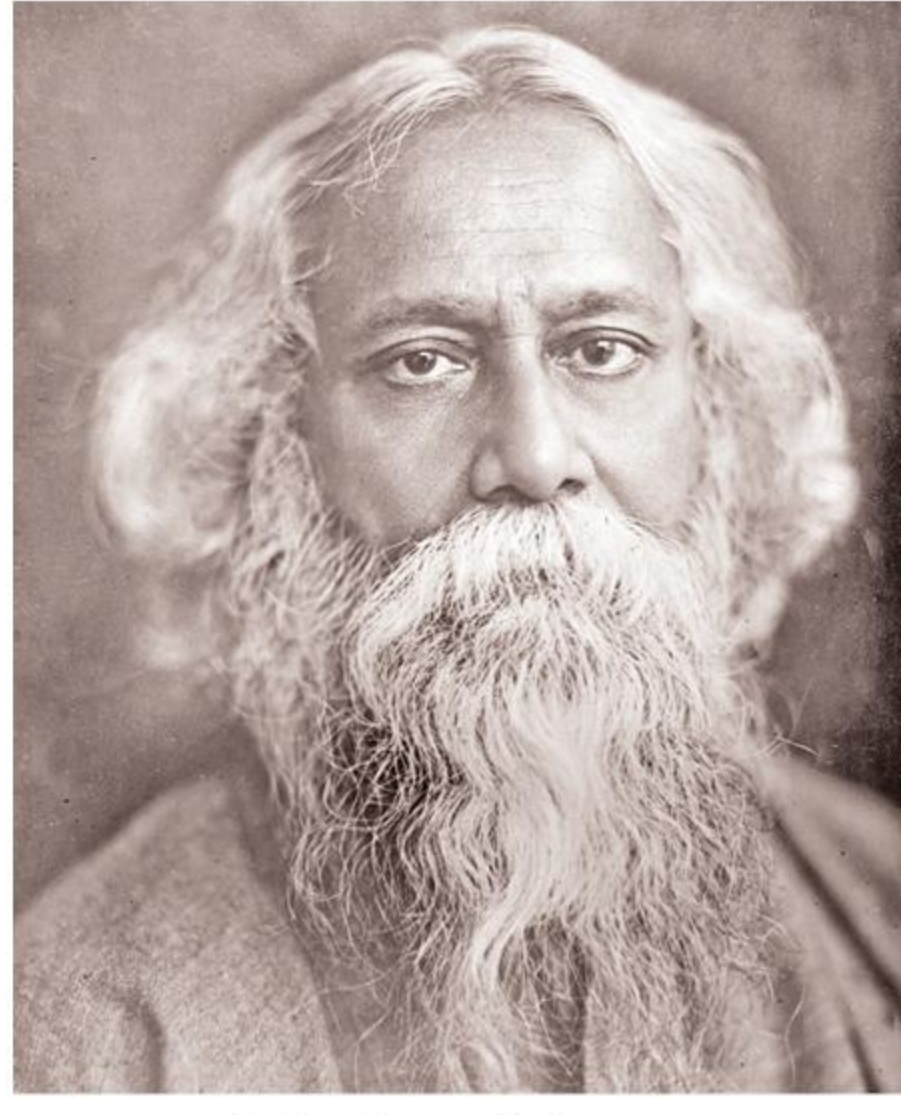
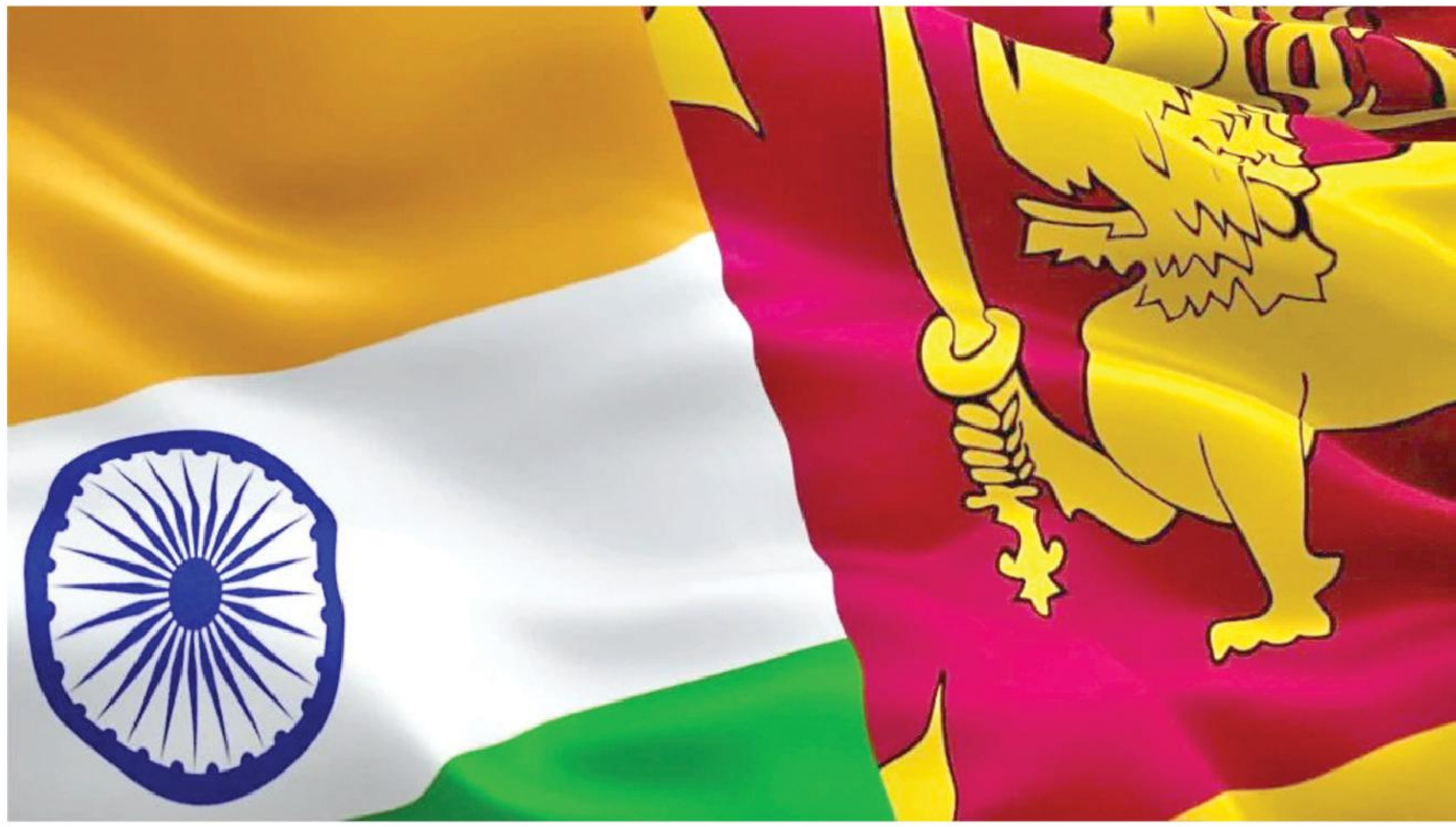
- Key Tasks for Implementation**
- (1) Post at least one daily Facebook post and a Tweet, containing promotional content on Sri Lanka.
 - (2) Post/ Tweet messages on every key cultural/ religious event of India and the states, with a view to reaching out to the wider public audience.
 - (3) Use local languages in posting/ tweeting wherever possible, in addition to English.
 - (4) Use Mission social media platforms to build a network of friends of Sri Lanka.

Mission Goal 6: Enhance connectivity between Sri Lanka and India.

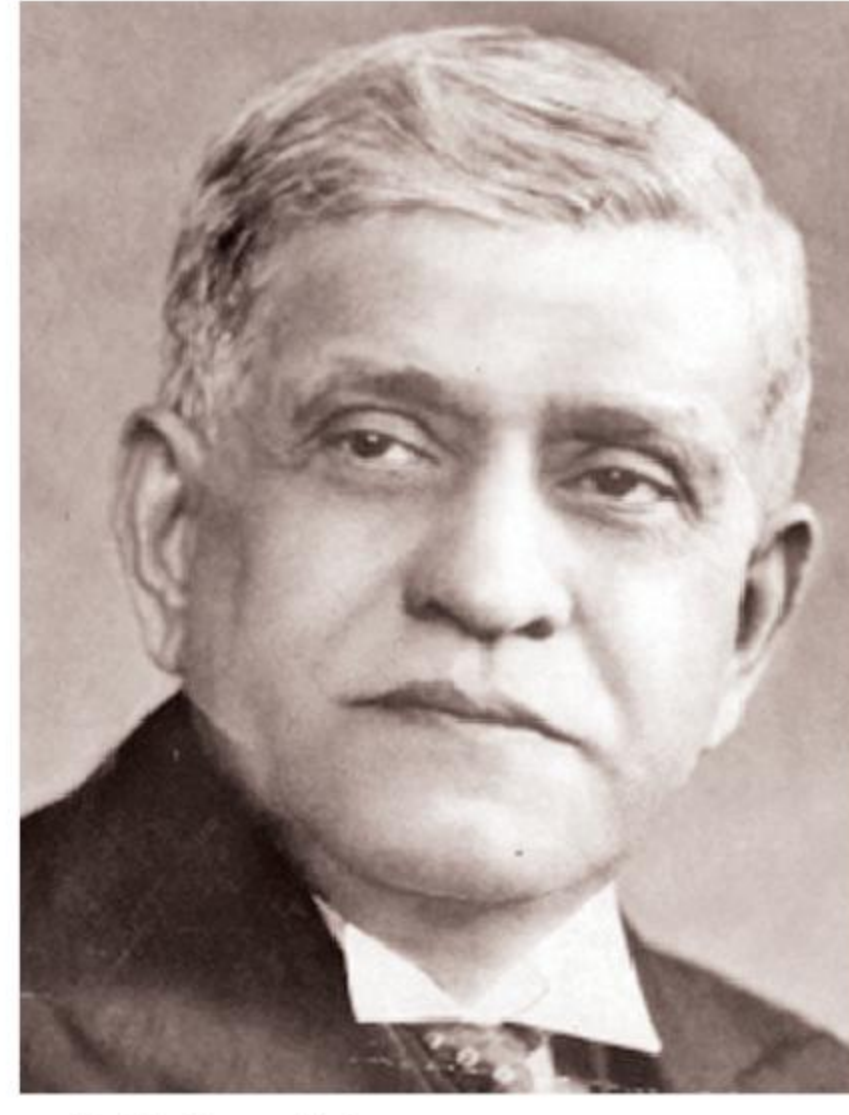
Overview:
As close neighbours, increasing connectivity between India and Sri Lanka is a vital aspect in the bilateral relationship and it is critical in enhancing people-to-people contacts. Given India's geographical size and its population, Sri Lanka stands to benefit from increased connectivity in terms of trade, tourism, people-to-people interactions etc. This would immensely contribute to the goal of making Sri Lanka an aviation hub and a gateway to South Asia.

Mission Objective 6.1: Facilitate the increase of air connectivity between Sri Lanka and India:

Increasing the number of destinations in India for SriLankan airlines would be of importance. This could



Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore



Sir D. B. Jayatilaka



Milinda Moragoda assuming duties in India.

be done by mainly targeting Sri Lankan Buddhist pilgrims coming to India, outbound Indian tourists and air cargo.

- Key Tasks for Implementation**
- (1) Identify new air destinations for SriLankan airlines flights.
 - (2) Operationalize already identified destinations such as Ahmedabad.

Mission Objective 6.2: Facilitate the increase of sea connectivity between Sri Lanka and India:

Increasing sea connectivity, particularly in terms of passengers, would be as vital as increasing air connectivity. This would promote more people-to-people contacts between southern India and Sri Lanka.

- Key Tasks for Implementation**
- (1) Pursue the resumption/ establishment of passenger ferry services between Sri Lanka and India: Thalaimannar-Rameswaram, Colombo-Tuticorin and Kankesanthurai- Karaikal.

Mission Objective 6.3: Facilitate electrical grid connectivity between Sri Lanka and India:

Establishing electrical grid connectivity between India and Sri Lanka would be mutually beneficial. This would enable Sri Lanka to obtain electricity during operational maintenance and droughts, and also to export excess generation to India. This will also allow greater space for renewables (e.g., wind farms in Mannar Basin).

- Key Tasks for Implementation**
- (1) Facilitate projects that create electrical grid connectivity between Sri Lanka and India.
 - (2) Focus on need to address inter-connection rules.

Mission Objective 6.4: Facilitate digital connectivity between Sri Lanka and India:

Sri Lanka has reportedly underutilized potential for E-Commerce platforms, E-payment gateways etc. More PPP activity in this area can spur a surge of business beneficial to

both countries, especially in the post-COVID scenario.

- Key Tasks for Implementation**
- (1) Facilitate projects that create digital connectivity between Sri Lanka and India.

Mission Goal 7: Promote Sri Lanka's interests in protecting its ocean resources.

Overview:
Sri Lanka and India being maritime neighbours gives rise to great challenges, such as poaching and bottom trawling by Indian fishermen in Sri Lankan waters. It is imperative to seek sustainable and long-lasting solutions for these challenges, while also using the opportunities presented by the close proximity of the two countries.

Sri Lanka and India have closely collaborated on maritime issues over a long period of time. At the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, both countries were successful in securing a Statement of Understanding on a special method of delimitation of the Continental Shelf for states in the southern part of the Bay of Bengal. The Indo-Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Agreements of 1974 and 1976 settled the maritime boundary between the two countries in the Palk Straits, Palk Bay and in the Bay of Bengal respectively. This includes the Kachchatheevu issue.

India and Sri Lanka also coordinated the promulgation of national laws declaring their respective maritime zones.

On the Continental Shelf, Sri Lanka and India held bilateral consultations several years ago. However, these consultations were suspended, pending the determination of the outer limits of Sri Lanka's shelf by the UN Commission on the Continental Shelf. Once this process is completed, consultations can be resumed on issues of bilateral delimitation of an overlapping area in the Bay of Bengal, under the guidance of

the National Ocean Affairs Committee (NOAC).

Mission Objective 7.1: Engage with Indian authorities (Central government, relevant State governments and other stakeholders) for a mechanism acceptable to all sides for the resolution of fisheries-related issues:

The Sri Lanka High Commissioner in New Delhi along with the Deputy High Commission in Chennai are to engage with the government at the central and state levels, and also with major stakeholders in Tamil Nadu to curb poaching and IUU fishing, as well as to impress upon the Indian side the adverse effects of bottom trawling. A proposal incorporating these issues is to be drawn up by the Government of Sri Lanka. The proposal may also highlight the various resolutions adopted at international for a pertaining to the ecological damage of bottom trawling, and provisions of the Sri Lankan law itself, while proposing a humane approach to genuine issues faced by fishermen on both sides of the IMLB.

- Key Tasks for Implementation**
- (1) Submission of concrete proposals from GoSL to the Ministry of External Affairs of India, also taking on board the views of Sri Lanka's Northern/ Eastern fishers.
 - (2) The High Commissioner to engage with the Minister of External Affairs of India and the Foreign Secretary, to expedite political clearances at the central government level.
 - (3) The High Commissioner and the Deputy High Commissioner in Chennai to hold meetings with the leaders of Tamil Nadu and influential representatives of fisheries associations, with a view to impressing upon them the importance of the proposal, and how it can benefit the fishermen of the state.

Mission Objective 7.2: Engage with Indian authorities for setting up a training centre for a marine disaster task force:

Given the increasing regularity of major marine accidents around Sri Lanka which affect Sri Lanka's ecological environment and destroy the livelihood of tens of thousands of people who are dependent on the sea, setting up of a marine disaster training centre with Indian expertise would prove to be of assistance to handle such future disasters. Much depends on the initial response during such incidents. The Sri Lanka High Commission in New Delhi may reach out to relevant institutions in India, with a view to initiating a formal process in this direction.

- Key Tasks for Implementation**
- (1) Initiation of meetings with the National Disaster Management Authority of India, which is involved in the mitigation and control of natural disasters in India.
 - (2) Identification of particular organisations which could assist Sri Lankan authorities in setting up training institutions and organisations to manufacture items related to disaster mitigation.

Mission Objective 7.3: Promote joint research in fisheries as well as in other marine and mineral resources:

Sri Lanka could benefit much from Indian expertise in research in fisheries and other marine and mineral resources, if engaged in joint endeavours.

- Key Tasks for Implementation**
- (1) Explore possibilities of arranging joint research projects.
 - (2) Seek opportunities for Sri Lankan scientists and experts to be stationed on board Indian research vessels.