



March 2017

## TWO CONGRESSIONAL VISITS SIGNAL BIPARTISAN SUPPORT FOR SRI LANKA

The month of February saw two congressional delegations from the U.S. House of Representatives visiting Sri Lanka signaling strong bipartisan support in the U.S. Congress for the Sri Lankan government's efforts towards consolidating democracy and promoting reconciliation.

The first delegation led by Chairman Peter Roskam (Republican-Illinois) and joined by Ranking Member David Price (Democrat – North Carolina), Congressman Gerry Connolly (Democrat-Virginia), and Congressman Adrian Smith (Republican-Nebraska) visited Sri Lanka as part of the House Democracy Partnership (HDP). Sri Lanka signed the collaboration agreement with HDP last September. A bipartisan, twenty-member commission of the House of Representatives, the HDP seeks to assist partner legislatures in their efforts to strengthen democratic institutions to promote responsive, transparent and effective government.

In addition to meetings with President Maithripala Sirisena, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera, Speaker Karu Jayasuriya, leader of the Opposition R. Sampanthan and other Sri Lankan parliamentarians, the delegation had meetings with the Parliamentary Women's Caucus, several parliamentary committees and civil so-



ciety. The delegation also travelled out of the capital to visit the Hambantota Port, Kataragama religious site, an environmental conservation site in the Yala National Park and toured a model housing

village in Weerawila.

The delegation from the House Committee on the Judiciary that followed is the largest congressional members group to visit Sri Lanka as yet. The eight-member bipartisan delegation was led by Chairman Robert Goodlatte (Republican-Virginia) of the Judiciary Committee. He was joined by Representatives Sheila Jackson Lee (Democrat-Texas), George Holding (Republican-North Carolina), Henry Cuellar (Democrat-Texas), Jason Smith (Republican-Missouri), Hank Johnson (Democrat-Georgia), Dave Trott (Republican-Michigan), and David Cicilline (Democrat-Rhode Island).

This delegation also met with the President, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Speaker, the leader of the Opposition and U.S. business representatives in Sri Lanka.

Discussions focused, among others, on maritime security, safety of sea-lanes in the Indo-Pacific, Sri Lanka's reconciliation process, including constitutional and economic reforms, increasing bilateral trade and investment between the U.S. and Sri Lanka.



## STATEMENT BY FOREIGN MINISTER MANGALA SAMARAWEEERA AT THE HIGH LEVEL SEGMENT OF THE 34TH SESSION OF THE U.N. HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL



Mr. President, High Commissioner for Human Rights, Madam Deputy High Commissioner, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It is an honour for me to be here today at the 34th Session of the UN Human Rights Council which I believe has the highest number of dignitaries in attendance.

I stand here today at a time when the very basis and fundamentals of human rights are being questioned around the world. Many of the universal values that we subscribe to are being challenged in the name of

‘populism’, with populists spinning webs from threads of ignorance. The role of this Organisation, in this context, is becoming more important than ever.

Mr. President,

This Council is familiar with Sri Lanka’s story. After years of denial, disengagement, and self-isolation, the National Unity Government of President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe, proceeded to set our country on a transformative trajectory in terms of human rights, good governance, rule of law, justice, reconciliation and economic development.

*More: [www.mfa.gov.lk](http://www.mfa.gov.lk)*

## SRI LANKA: A GROWING HUB IN THE INDO-PACIFIC

“Sri Lanka is eager to work with the maritime powers of the Indian Ocean and beyond, to make our oceans secure for unimpeded commerce and peaceful navigation”, Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam said, earlier this month. The Ambassador was addressing a public event hosted by the Hudson Institute, a Washington-based think tank, on “Sri Lanka, A growing hub in the Indo-Pacific.”

Ambassador Husain Haqqani, Senior Fellow & Director, South and Central Asia, Hudson Institute moderated the event. He introduced Sri Lanka as a fast emerging economic and political powerhouse, disproportionate to its size both in geographic terms and in population. He observed that Sri Lanka’s geo-strategic location has helped it emerge as a critical stakeholder in the Indo-Pacific region.

Echoing Ambassador Haqqani’s observation, Ambassador Kariyawasam said that Sri Lanka’s location made it a maritime hub since ancient times, and



having achieved peace and stability, Sri Lanka was keen and able to re-assume this important role in the Indian Ocean and the extended terrain of the Indo-Pacific. Sri Lanka is situated on the sea lanes connected with the other main growth engines in the Indo-Pacific. This busy East-West shipping route passes just six nautical miles south of Sri Lanka, carrying

two-thirds of global petroleum supplies and half of all containerized cargo. The Colombo Port is already the busiest transshipment port in South Asia. In the current international environment where many locations are becoming insecure and volatile or face environmental challenges, Sri Lanka, in comparison, is a country at peace, has consolidated democracy, and revived economic growth, with emphasis on a green and a blue economy.

[Listen to the event](#)

[Read the Ambassador’s remarks](#)

## NEW HONORARY CONSUL FOR SRI LANKA IN HAWAII

At a well-attended ceremony at the Pacific Club of Hawaii, Ambassador Prasad Kariyawasam extended a warm welcome to Bede Dhammika Cooray as the new Honorary Consul of Sri Lanka for the state of Hawaii. The presentation of the commission of appointment to the new Honorary Consul was preceded by a celebration to commemorate the 69<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Independence of Sri Lanka with the participation of senior representatives of the Hawaiian administration, judiciary, diplomatic community, U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM), East West Center, Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS) and



the Sri Lankan American community.

Speaking at the event, Ambassador Kariyawasam highlighted the recent exponential progress in the United States-Sri Lanka relations, and thanked the people of the United States, especially those from Hawaii, for becoming partners with Sri Lanka in its challenging and transformative journey to develop as a modern democracy, whilst integrating with the world for business and trade, in peace and friendship. Sri Lanka fully recognizes the importance of Hawaii and the institutions based in Honolulu for the further promotion of bilateral relations with the United States.

*More: [www.slembassyusa.org](http://www.slembassyusa.org)*

## U.S. PACIFIC FLEET AND SRI LANKA NAVY LEAD PACIFIC PARTNERSHIP GOODWILL MISSION IN SRI LANKA

The U.S. Pacific Fleet and its transport ship USNS Fall River is in Sri Lanka for the first-ever Pacific Partnership goodwill mission to Sri Lanka from March 6-18.

Pacific Partnership is the largest multinational humanitarian assistance and disaster relief preparedness mission conducted each year in the Indo-Pacific region.

Working side-by-side with the Sri Lanka Navy and local organizations in the Hambantota region, this multinational effort includes free community health clinics; school and hospital renovations; learning exchanges for medical and disaster-relief responders; seminars to promote women's roles in peace and security; and public performances by the U.S. 7th Fleet Band.

"Through this Pacific Partnership mission, the United States will continue to help Sri Lanka respond more quickly to humanitarian challenges. At the same time, our Sri Lankan partners will share with us their valuable lessons learned from past natural disasters," said U.S. Ambassador Atul Keshap.

*More: [lk.usembassy.gov](http://lk.usembassy.gov)*

## U.S. ZYDECO BAND "MO' MOJO" VISITS SRI LANKA TO STRENGTHEN CULTURAL CONNECTIONS



Mo' Mojo, an American zydeco band, concluded its five-day tour of Sri Lanka on February 16 with a high-energy, free, public concert for an appreciative crowd in Colombo. The U.S. Embassy-sponsored visit included public performances in Jaffna and Colombo; workshops for music students; and master classes for Sri Lankan musicians.

"We bring American musicians here to increase understanding of the United States' diverse musical heritage and to strengthen our cultural connections with Sri Lankans," said U.S. Ambassador to Sri Lanka Atul Keshap, who introduced the band at the public performance in Colombo.

*More: [lk.usembassy.gov](http://lk.usembassy.gov)*

## NPR: IN SRI LANKA'S TEA PARADISE, A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE IS BREWING

In 1890, Sir Thomas Lipton arrived on the island of Ceylon, now Sri Lanka, to purchase a plot of land that would become the first tea estate in his global tea empire.



These days, in the Ambadandegama Valley located just a few miles from Lipton's original estate, another experiment in tea production is unfolding.

Tucked into the side of a precipitous mountain, Amba Estate is a tea operation that shares 10 percent of its revenues with its workers. That's a novel approach



here in Sri Lanka, a country that's one of the world's largest exporters of tea — an industry that employs more than 1 million of its 22 million residents.

"What makes us different is our 10 percent revenue share — not profit share. We decided to do revenue share because even when we're not making a profit, we felt it was only right that workers and management receives recognition," says Simon Bell.

*More: [www.npr.org](http://www.npr.org)*

## SRI LANKA'S PSYCHOSOCIAL COUNSELORS LOOK TO THEIR PEERS TO IMPROVE CARE 2017 - ASIA FOUNDATION

Two years after Sri Lankans voted to elect a new coalition government, and eight years after the bloody, three-decade long ethnic war ended, reconciliation efforts to rebuild the country are beginning to have positive, tangible impact on the daily lives of citizens, particularly in the North and East. Beyond investments in infrastructure and economic growth, however, the new government has also made efforts to recognize and address the psychosocial issues that continue to affect people in the aftermath of the war.

Long-term psychosocial issues heightened after the

end of the war, caused by trauma, substance misuse, domestic violence, psychological problems, and breakdown of social relationships and traditional family structures. The limited provision of mental health and psychosocial support services is compounded by the fact that social stigma prevents vulnerable and trauma-affected individuals from seeking professional help. The country is still witnessing many of these same psychosocial issues across the country 13 years after the 2004 tsunami left hundreds of thousands of people dead, and entire towns devastated. *More: [www.asiafoundation.org](http://www.asiafoundation.org)*