
Indian funds for Palaly project

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B. Muralidhar Reddy COLOMBO: India on Monday handed over bank drafts worth Sri Lanka Rs. 117 million to Sri Lanka for Palaly military-cum civilian runway rehabilitation project in the Jaffna peninsula, Sri Lanka Defence Ministry announced here on Wednesday. (\$1 fetches Sri Lanka Rs. 114).

Attempts to elicit information from the Indian mission on the quantum of the first instalment for the project and remaining phases if any were not successful. Palaly houses the main base of the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) in the Jaffna peninsula. The air base is also used by civilian and military aircraft carrying Jaffna-bound passengers. The Sri Lankan Defence Ministry said, "Deepening and strengthening the long-standing bilateral relationship between Sri Lanka and India, the Indian government financially assisted the Palaly Runway Rehabilitation project. Bank drafts worth of SLRs over 117 million, the second instalment of the India's assistance for the project was officially handed over to the Secretary of Defence Gotabaya Rajapaksa by Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Alok Prasad," it said. Separately, the Indian mission said since most of the urgent medical needs of the war displaced in the Menik Farm zone assigned to the Indian hospital had been met, India has informed Colombo of its intent to de-induct the medical team from August 31. At the same time, since a very useful facility has been set up, and since the physical infrastructure of the hospital remains in place, the Government of India has recommended to the Ministry of Health of Sri Lanka that it consider taking over the hospital," it said. Following a request from Sri Lanka in February 2009, India despatched a 62-member medical team and an emergency field hospital on March 10. The team set up a hospital in Pulmoddai in the eastern province to treat medical evacuees from the conflict in northern Sri Lanka. In the next two months, the medical team treated more than 3,000 patients evacuated by the ICRC to Pulmoddai and catered to the medical needs of war displaced in some of the camps in Pulmoddai. Following the conclusion of the conflict in May, the two governments agreed to shift the medical team and the hospital to the war displaced camps in the Menik Farm area in the Vavuniya district in the last week of May. At the war displaced camps, the hospital has treated more than 25,000 patients. The hospital has also been distributing free medicines and providing surgical facilities as required. In another development, under the Sri Lankan government's resettlement programme of the nearly three lakh displaced civilians in the transitional centres in the North, 439 families temporarily housed in Vavuniya relief villages were sent to their places of origin in the East on Wednesday. This is the first phase of the resettlement scheme of the displaced housed in Vavuniya temporary camps. In addition, the government took steps to resettle 3,112 persons of 1,051 families who temporary occupied various places in Vavuniya but were residents of Jaffna back in their homes in the peninsula. A statement by the government said that Parliamentarian Basil Rajapaksa participated in the event where these persons were provided transportation facilities using 70 buses to get to their destinations from the transitional camps provided by the government. Meanwhile the World Food Programme (WFP) has approved a budgetary increase of \$17.09 million for the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operations (PRRO) for Sri Lanka. This increase brings the total PRRO budget to \$ 134.9 million for the year. Meanwhile, the Ambassadors of Russia and China to the Conference on Disarmament (CD) were prominent among those who bade a warm farewell to Dayan Jayatilleka, Sri Lanka's outgoing Ambassador/permanent representative to the U.N. in Geneva on August 4. A statement by the Sri Lankan Geneva mission said Russian Ambassador described Dr. Jayatilleka as "a highly skilled, highly cultured diplomat with a profound knowledge of international relations; very energetic and active, who has his own point of view on events in his own country and the world, and has contributed to the defence of the interests of his own country as well as the cause of international cooperation. Chinese Ambassador said Dr. Jayatilleka would be missed "not only because of his outstanding wisdom, insight, eloquence and elegance, but because of his important contributions to the work of the CD and the Group of 21. Courtesy:hindu.com