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## India & Sri Lanka sign 5 agreements during the visit of Indian External Affairs Minister

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Welcoming the Indian Minister of External Affairs S.M. Krishna to Sri Lanka, Minister of External Affairs G.L. Peiris emphasized the deep rooted friendship and historical ties which exist between the two countries, and elaborated that Sri Lanka and India are bound to each other geographically and in terms of their economies, which have stood the test of time. Minister Krishna began a four day official visit to Sri Lanka on 16th January 2012, at the invitation of Minister Peiris and called on President Mahinda Rajapaksa and Prime Minister D.M. Jayaratne.

Minister Peiris observed that in times good and bad and those of turbulence, stability and prosperity, the constant factor in Sri Lanka's foreign relations has been the depth of friendship with India. In this context, he recalled the manner in which India has always stood by Sri Lanka, and provided every possible assistance. Minister Peiris upheld that there could be issues of concern in relations between any two countries, and however the distinguishing feature of Sri Lanka's relationship with India is the spontaneity of dialogue. He said that no issue however controversial or emotive in connotation has the two countries been unable to resolve, due to close engagement in an open manner culminating in pragmatic conclusions. He was confident that the threshold that has been reached with regard to Indo-Lanka relations was not something fleeting, but to nurture, safeguard and develop throughout the passage of time. Recalling that Minister Krishna had last visited Sri Lanka in November 2010, Minister Peiris further observed that there are common features in both these visits. He outlined the first as being a platform to discuss the range of issues straddling every aspect of public policy, which include housing, transport, water, telecommunications and healthcare, giving rise to the conclusion of Agreements on these subjects between the two countries during the current visit. The second feature of the visit was designated by Minister Peiris as being geographical, as Minister Krishna yet again was visiting the north and south, of the country. Therefore, he said the completeness of Minister Krishna's visit in terms of subject matter and places within the island are noteworthy. Minister Peiris in conclusion stated that Minister Krishna's visit cements the relationship which is already vibrant and substantial. He further emphasized that it is a relationship not just among friends, but among close relatives, which was exemplified most vividly by Minister Krishna's spontaneous attendance soon after his arrival in Colombo, at the Thaipongal Ceremony on the invitation of President Mahinda Rajapaksa. Minister Peiris upheld that this has not happened regularly or as a matter of routine between countries and their leaders, and the extension of such an invitation was a demonstration of sincerity that underpins the strong and vibrant relationship between India and Sri Lanka. The delegation level talks led by the two Ministers were held on 17th January 2012 at the Ministry of External Affairs. The discussions covered a range of issues of mutual interest which was followed by the conclusion of five Agreements, pertaining to the Implementation of the Housing Project for 49,000 houses; the Field of Agriculture; Cooperation between Telecom Regulatory Authority of India and Telecommunication Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka; Dollar Credit Line of US \$ 382.37 Million from the Government of India for the Restoration of Northern Railway Service and Buyer's Credit under National Export Insurance Account of USD 60.69 Million for Dambulla Water Supply Project. Ministry of External Affairs Colombo 18th January 2012