LLRC report, basis for reconciliation - Indian External Affairs Minister

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Chaminda PERERA The Indian government yesterday said that the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) has many constructive recommendations which would lead to genuine national reconciliation. Addressing the media in Colombo visiting Indian External Affairs Minister S M Krishna said that Sri Lanka government is committed to implement the LLRC recommendations. He said that the efforts that were taken to end the three-decades conflict should now be employed towards the creation of genuine reconciliation and India is always ready to assist Sri Lanka in this respect too. &Idquo; We are ready to help in whatever way we can in a spirit of cooperation and goodwill" , he added. Krishna said that the Sri Lankan government has on many occasions conveyed to India that it would work for a lasting solution based on the 13th Amendment.

He said that India expects the discussion between the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) would pave way for the settlement of the ethnic issue. Krishna added that President Mahinda Rajapaksa assured him that he would be committed to a settlement based on the 13 amendment and plus approach when he raised the issue with him yesterday morning. Touching on the fishermen's issue, the visiting Foreign Minister added that no force should be used on fishermen. He said that the fishermen's issues need to be addressed with utmost care and they should be treated in a humane manner. Meanwhile, an Indian High Commission press release quoted Indian External Affairs Minister S M Krishna as saving at the media interaction: & ldquo: I am pleased to be in Sri Lanka again. At the outset, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Minister Prof. Peiris and the Sri Lankan Government for the warm hospitality extended to me and to my delegation. & Idquo; Earlier, I had the opportunity to call on President Mahinda Rajapaksa. We had a useful exchange of views on ways to take the bilateral relationship forward. With Minister Peiris, we had the opportunity to review progress in various areas, including trade, services and investment, development cooperation, science and technology, culture and education. I am satisfied that the projects under our development partnership have progressed well since my last visit. "Minister Peiris and I have just signed a MoU specifying the modalities for the next phase of the housing project being implemented with India's assistance of about 260 million US Dollars. This MoU involves the construction of 49,000 houses, out of a total of 50,000 houses. As you know, the Pilot Project for construction of the first 1000 houses is in an advanced stage of completion. During my visit to Jaffna tomorrow, I would be handing over the first lot of these houses to the beneficiaries. "We also signed MoUs for Cooperation in the Field of Agriculture and for Cooperation between the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India and Telecommunication Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka. &Idquo;Our development assistance projects are entirely based on the priorities set by the government and the people of Sri Lanka. The main themes are connectivity, housing, health, education, livelihood restoration and economic revival. I would be visiting Kilinochchi tomorrow, to handover medical equipment to the District General Hospital, and also reopen schools we had helped repair. As a token gesture, we are also providing 10,000 bicycles to IDPs in the Northern Province. &ldguo; I am happy to note that our bilateral trade in goods would touch the 5 billion US Dollar mark. India is also a leading player in Sri Lanka, as far as investments and tourist arrivals are concerned. To sustain this positive momentum in our trade and economic relations and take it to the next level, it is necessary to finalize a more comprehensive framework of economic cooperation. &Idquo:India is committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. It is our hope that the vision and leadership that resulted in an end to armed conflict will now be employed in the quest for a genuine political reconciliation. We look forward to progress in the ongoing dialogue process, in order to address this issue in a timely manner. We will continue to work with the government of Sri Lanka, and help in whatever way we can, to take this process forward, in a spirit of partnership and cooperation. &Idquo; We have noted the many constructive recommendations contained in the recentlyreleased report of the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC). These recommendations, when implemented, would mark a major step forward in the process of genuine national reconciliation, to which the Sri Lankan government is committed. Sri Lanka must seize this opportunity. The government of Sri Lanka has on many occasions conveyed to us its commitment to move towards a political settlement based on the full implementation of the 13th Amendment to the Sri Lankan Constitution, and building on it, so as to achieve meaningful devolution of powers. forward to an expeditious and constructive approach to the dialogue process. We believe that continuation of the dialogue between the Government and the TNA would pave the way for political settlement, including under the rubric of the Parliamentary Select Committee. &Idquo:I discussed this matter with President Rajapaksa this morning. The President assured me that he stands by his commitment to pursuing the 13th Amendment plus approach.&rdguo: Source: Daily News, January 18, 2012

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