



**Center for Global & Strategic  
Studies Islamabad**



**Embassy of Democratic Socialist  
Republic of Sri Lanka**

**Post Event Report**  
**Conference on “Enduring Friendship**  
**between Sri Lanka and Pakistan”**

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## **PARTICIPANTS**

The Conference was attended by almost 500 participants including students and faculty members from various universities, government representatives, retired senior armed forces officers, diplomats, law enforcement officials from across the country and individuals from public and private entities.

**Host** Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir Ul Islam, HI(M), (Retd) -  
Chairman, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS)

**Chief Guest** Mr. Sahibzada Muhammad Mehboob Sultan, Federal Minister for  
National Food Security & Research, Ministry for National Food  
Security & Research

**Guest Speakers** Ms. Saroja Sirisena, Director General of Economic Affairs,  
Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Democratic Socialist  
Republic of Sri Lanka

Major General Shakeel Hussain (Retd)-Former High Commissioner of  
Pakistan to Sri Lanka

His Excellency Mr. Noordeen Mohamed Shaheid-High Commissioner  
of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to Pakistan

## **INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKERS**

### **Mr. Sahibzada Muhammad Mehboob Sultan, Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research, Ministry for National Food Security & Research**



Mr. Sahibzada Muhammad Mehboob Sultan is a Pakistani politician who is the current Federal Minister for National Food Security and Research, in office since 5 October 2018. He has been a member of the National Assembly of Pakistan since August 2018. Previously he was the member of the National Assembly from 2002 to 2013.

### **Ms. Saroja Sirisena, Director General of Economic Affairs, Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**



Ms. Saroja Sirisena heads the Public Diplomacy and Economic Affairs Divisions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka. She is also the Ministry's Spokesperson. She served as the Consul General of Sri Lanka in Mumbai between 2014 & 2018, She served as the Director General for External Relations in the Ministry of Economic Development handling foreign affairs related matters from 2012-2014.

Prior to this, she served as Director/South Asia and Director/Consular Affairs of the Ministry of External Affairs of Sri Lanka. The excellency Ms Saroja Sirisena is a career diplomat of the Sri Lanka Foreign Service (1998 batch) who has served as Minister of the Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the United Nations Office in Geneva from April 2010-October 2011 and the Minister Counsellor of the Sri Lankan Embassy in Brussels attributed to the European Union from 2007-2010. She has also served in the Sri Lanka Embassy in Paris and in Sri Lanka's Permanent Mission to UNESCO as the First Secretary from 2001- 2005.

## **Major General Shakeel Hussain (Retd)-Former High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka**



Major General Shakeel Hussain served in various key positions. He was the former high commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka. He served as the Director General of Anti-Narcotics force of Pakistan. General Shakeel was also the deputy Commandant of the Pakistan Military Academy, an instructor at the Infantry School Quetta, and Command and Staff College Quetta. In 2005 while commanding an Infantry Division he oversaw the rehabilitation & relief operations after the devastating Earthquake in October. For his exceptional services during this operation, he was awarded the Sitara-e-Eisaar by the President of Pakistan. Currently, he works as an advisor to Pakistan's largest private security company 'Pathfinder Group'.

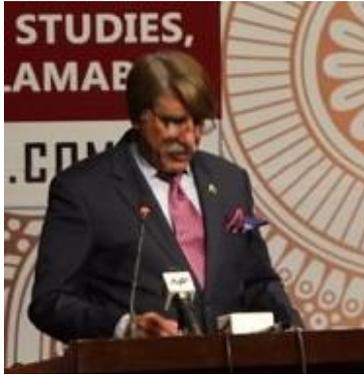
## **His Excellency Mr. Noordeen Mohamed Shaheid-High Commissioner of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to Pakistan**



The newly appointed high commissioner of Sri Lanka to the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Mr. Noordeen Mohamed Shaheid assumed responsibilities at the Sri Lanka high commission in the federal capital of Pakistan Islamabad in October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2018.

Previously, high commissioner Mohammad Shaheid had held several high-level positions in the state sector. He had served as the chairman of national institute of Cooperative Development, chairman Sri Lanka foreign employment agency, Director Sri Lanka Bureau of foreign employment, advisor to the ministry of resettlement and disaster relief services, chairman, intellectual property advisory commission, chairman and director general of national enterprise development authority and prior to taking up this diplomatic assignment he was working as the chairman of consumer affairs council from 2016.

**Opening Remarks by Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir Ul Islam, HI (M), (Retd) -  
Chairman, Center for Global & Strategic Studies (CGSS)**



Excellences, Worthy Panelists, Distinguished Guests, Ladies, and Gentlemen

Assalam o Alaikum & Good Evening

Lieutenant General Muhammad Zahir Ul Islam (Retd) commenced the ceremony by welcoming all participants on behalf of the Center for Global and Strategic Studies (CGSS).

He expressed his gratitude for the worthy members of the panel who are here to talk on this significant subject of “Enduring Friendship between Sri Lanka and Pakistan.”

He thanked everyone for sparing their time and being part of this commemoration and hoped that the conference would be an enlightening session for all.

He highlighted the fact that despite the geographical and religious barriers, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have always been trusted-partners of each other with historical linkages dating back to the period of Gandhara civilization.

It was asserted by General Zahir that both countries are an essential part of the region and quite appreciably enjoy very cordial and friendly relations and extend cooperation to each other in different sectors and are keen to further strengthen existing relations.

He was of the view that the current forces at work are shifting the power-centers and swing of this center is at Asia rather than the international community. With the strategic location of Sri Lanka, as the East-West sea corridor link, and Pakistan, as the conduit for world economies, both countries are poised to become international trading centers. He added that the formation of new alliances in the region to maximize the power of regional states provides new opportunities for both countries to join hands and integrate themselves with the world’s leading economies.

General Zahir stressed that Pakistan and Sri Lanka have continued to maintain strong, robust and reliable relations through increased interaction at the highest political level and in the sphere of public diplomacy such as people-to-people and intercultural communication.

He pointed up that Pakistan values its close relationship with Sri Lanka and both the countries have always stood by each other in turbulent times and shared common views on regional security and in addition, both are striving hard enough to defeat terrorism in their respective countries and regions.

He recommended that both Pakistan and Sri Lanka have natural resources, which could be exchanged, without tying the trade to the dollar which is a win-win situation for both the countries. Additionally, both countries can collaborate in various fields including trade, joint investments, and defense sector.

General Zahir Ul Islam concluded by accentuating that Pakistan-Sri Lanka ties can serve as a shining example of cooperation at the bilateral, regional and international level. As the business and trading communities of both countries complement each other's strengths, and as the two governments stand by each other in various bilateral and international fora. He extrapolated that we take pride in the unconditional support and in the diversification of the relationship that has manifested itself on a broad base.

In the end, General Zahir Ul Islam endorsed that people to people contact between the public of both states via sports, education, music, cinema, religion, and cultural interactions must also be increased.

**Speech by Mr. Sahibzada Muhammad Mehboob Sultan, Federal Minister for National Food Security & Research, Ministry for National Food Security & Research**

**Dear Excellences, worthy guests, ladies, and gentlemen,**

As-Salaam-Alaikum,

Respected Minister for national food security, Mr. Sahibzada Mehboob Sultan greeted the audience and admired the efforts of both countries Pakistan and Sri Lanka to forge the cordial relationship between them. He started by affirming the fact that Pakistan and Sri Lanka's



relations spanning over six decades are characterized by the spirit of true friendship, mutual respect, understanding, and excellent cooperation. These two particular states are significant in the South Asian region, even more so because of their geostrategic position. And despite the geographical and religious barriers, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have always been trusted-partners of each other with historical linkages dating back to the period of Gandhara civilization, from the first to seventh century AD.

He underscored that Pakistan and Sri Lanka have sustained strong, robust and reliable relations through amplified interaction at the highest political level and in the sphere of people-to-people contact. The bilateral relations between the two countries, under the overarching umbrella of SAARC, help to promote a brighter and integrated future for all the people of South Asia. Sri Lanka was the first country to sign a Free Trade Agreement with Pakistan, which became operational from June 12, 2005. 4,000 items can be imported to Pakistan from Sri Lanka.

Mr. Sultan was of the view that Sri Lanka enjoys a key position in the Indian Ocean and has much to offer in terms of maritime cooperation and the maintenance of peace and security in the Indian Ocean region. He revealed that Pakistan desires to enhance the maritime cooperation with Sri Lanka and seeks increased engagement between the armed forces of both countries. He also assured that Pakistan will continue offering training facilities to the Sri Lankan Armed Forces, Police and other institutions.

Federal Minister articulated that China is rigorously working on the China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) in Pakistan and pushing to increase its boldness in the IOR, Pakistan and Sri Lanka are at a beneficial position due to their strong alliance with China, which guarantees

peace in the region's waters. He also acquaints with the view that besides ensuring that no single country of strategic bloc establishes its hegemonic monopoly over maritime trade, especially in IOR.

He said that the people and the government of Pakistan are standing alongside with the



government and people of Sri Lanka in their march towards a bright future, which he denotes as a passage to progress and prosper in future. In addition, he said that both states agreed to expand their mutual ties beyond political and defense paradigms to overall comprehensive engagement, such as trade, joint

investments, and cooperation in new dimensions. He reminded that Pakistan had signed a number of agreements with Sri Lanka and both states are determined to eradicate the menace of terrorism from their countries.

Federal Minister acclaimed that Pakistan values its close relationship with Sri Lanka as both countries have always stood by each other in turbulent times and share common views on regional security. Furthermore, the respective countries are facing an existential threat from hostile states.

He cited that the volume of trade between Pakistan and Sri Lanka had an increased in the last few years and after the signing of the free trade agreement Pakistan became the second largest trading partner of Sri Lanka within the South Asian region.

Mr. Sahibzada Sultan called attention towards Pak-Sri Lanka ties, which could serve as an outstanding example of cooperation at the bilateral, regional and international level. He added that if the two governments stood fast by each other in different bilateral and international forums the business and trading communities of both countries could be strengthened and economies of both countries could prosper. He narrated the fact that Pakistan and Sri Lanka share deep ties from 2,500 years of the Buddhist and Gandhara history, they have an element of mutual respect and consider each other as sovereign equals, and aim for a future with a common and shared objective which also contributes substantially to regional and global peace.

He stressed that Sri Lanka and Pakistan is in need of increase cooperation in health, education and other social sectors. He added that the current dynamics of international politics resides much focus on the Asian states due to their strategic positions. Sri Lanka being the East-west sea corridor link and Pakistan having great attraction form the world economies due to CPEC has become the international trading hubs. Moreover, he recapitulated that Pakistan and Sri Lanka have great potential and are focusing on further enhancement of bilateral trade relations and economic conditions.

Mr. Sultan indicated that the strong ties between both Asian nation-states are established through sports diplomacy, especially via cricket. The 2009 attack on a Sri Lankan cricket team in Lahore sent shockwaves across the world but the Sri Lankan government and its people stood firmly with their Pakistani friends which is much appreciated by Pakistani populace.

Mr. Federal Minister also drew attention towards the blue economy initiative by the Government of Sri Lanka which was a timely effort, as Sri Lanka is full of attractive tourist destinations and Gwadar as an emerging economic hub is analogous to them, and both the states can adopt similar policy approaches for future stability and economic prosperity.

Another aspect of Sri Lanka-Pakistan economic relationship highlighted by the speaker was the inputs and vital commercial intelligence sharing. He indicated that our countries carried out



extensive studies on commercial intelligence and now it is fully-equipped to share vital information with a friendly country such as Sri Lanka. He emphasized that the new

Government of Pakistan is aimed at strengthening the bilateral relations between Sri Lanka and Pakistan.

He concluded that our relations are rooted in antiquity, shared cultures, values, and sense of common destiny. Pakistan and Sri Lanka are in need to renew the manifold bonds of friendship. Pakistan's ties with Sri Lanka endures special priority as the leaders share common views on regional and international issues. In addition, Pakistan places its bilateral relations with Sri Lanka at high esteem and desires to further expand bilateral cooperation in different fields for benefit of the two peoples. The Government of China is investing in a new port near the capital Colombo and desires to establish a Free Trade Agreement with Sri Lanka as part of its aspiring 'One Belt One Road' initiative. Furthermore, Sri Lanka is manufacturing 75% electricity through the hydro source and both countries have the potential to work together in the energy sector for attaining mutual benefits.

He suggested that confidence-building measures (CBM's) are needed to be taken in diplomatic fields. Furthermore, the maritime order, particularly in the Indian Ocean, had been commonly respected and best observed. It is, therefore, the best time to initiate not just talks but action.

Mr. Sahibzada Mehboob Sultan ended his speech by accentuating that Pakistan is looking forward to enhancing its ties with the Sri Lankan Government and the business community of both nations needs to step up their energies to realize the potential areas of business collaboration.

**Ms. Saroja Sirisena, Director General of Economic Affairs, Spokesperson of Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka**

Ms. Saroja Sirisena started his speech by extending her warm wishes to all Pakistanis and lauded the efforts of Sri Lankan High Commission in forging cordial relations with Pakistan. Ms. Sirisena also thanked the Center for Global and Strategic Studies to invite her at an esteemed forum. She thanked the participants for being part of the program.



She was of the view that both countries are entering in the 8<sup>th</sup> decade of their relation, there is much to look forward. She claimed it as Asian Century by comparing it with the rest of the world, and in her analysis, she pondered upon certain astounding facts such as the ratio of youth in Asian communities versus rest. She also highlighted the economic prospects of the South Asian region in near future.

Ms. Saroja told the participants and panelists about the relation between Sri Lanka and Pakistan and denoted it as a long-standing partnership. She emphasized that in 1973 Sri Lanka laid the foundation of a self-sufficient economy in response to the destitute and unprivileged status of its masses. She narrated that the public was disgruntled due to food scarcity and long queues of people to take food from government authorities. She told the fact that Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Ms. Sirimavo Bandaranaike was the one who communicated her country's concern with her Pakistani counterpart Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto who was prime minister of the country at the time. PM Sri Lanka briefed Pakistani PM about their food shortage and indicated that they are only left with rice stock of two weeks and there are dynamics are leading to starvation of masses and government of Sri Lanka might collapse as well. PM Z. A Bhutto urgently sent 2 vessels containing rice to Sri Lanka and ordered them to deliver before two weeks.

Ms. Saroja acclaimed the input of Pakistan and declared it as the highest and warmest moment of their relation. She praised it as 'Asian Way' and admire this notion by stating that we share many similar things apart from the fact that we have different faiths.

She also mentioned a story of her friend who was traveling at a cab with a Pakistani driver who asked her friend about her country of origin. Upon her reply of being a Sri Lankan, cab driver denied taking fare due to his love for the Sri Lankan cricket team.

She added that bilateral relation should be promoted and it is time for Asians to airborne. She concluded by drawing attention towards the fact that this is an Asian century and she hoped that cordial relations will be taken forward by the younger generation.

### **Major General Shakeel Hussain (Retd)-Former High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka**



Dear Excellences, worthy guests, ladies, and gentlemen,

Major General Shakeel Hussain began his speech by highlighting the fact that Pakistan and Sri Lanka are two important South Asian nation-states due to their unique geostrategic locations. Pakistan is the Indian Ocean's transit route to Afghanistan and Central Asia and eventually Europe, whereas Sri Lanka lies near major sea lanes in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Thus, the tiny island state assumed greater importance in the context of maritime trade and combating piracy. General Shakeel, who also served as former ambassador of Pakistan to Sri Lanka expressed his speculations about Chinese investments in a new port near the capital Colombo and further desires of establishing a Free Trade zone along its ambitious 'One Belt One Road' geo-economic project.

He stressed that despite geographical and religious barriers, Pakistan and Sri Lanka have always been trusted-partners of each other with historical linkages dating back to the period of Gandhara civilization, from the first to seventh century AD. Their friendship strengthened during the war of 1971 when Pakistan's jets were allowed to refuel on Sri Lankan territory despite Indian furor. He added that the equation of trust and friendship further developed during the crisis of Jaffna when Pakistan obliged to Sri Lankan request for military aid and airlifted Multi Barrel Rocket Launchers (MBRLs) in an emergency from Karachi to Colombo. This helped the Sri Lankan military to push back LTTE rebels and secure Jaffna. He clarified that both countries not only share cultural heritage but also have a shared history of internal instability created by the activities of non-state actors. This, as a result, gave both nations an insight into each other's problems, stemming from internal and external players. He appended that, historically Sri Lanka has never wanted India to dominate the region, both economically

and militarily. Thus, the resilient nature of both states in face of adversities and shared objectives makes them natural allies.

Major General Shakeel asserted that the current dynamics of global politics, especially maritime security architecture is changing at a fast pace. Due to a strategic location of Sri Lanka, both countries are poised to become international trading hubs due to their geographic location in the East-West sea corridor conduit for world economies. He was of the view that the formation of new alliances comes with prospects of integration and influx of economic activities if both states join hands.

He upheld the view that Sri Lanka is keen to further enhance bilateral trade and economic relations with Pakistan as both countries have good potential to do trade in many areas. Moreover, Pakistani products including pharmaceuticals, rice, fruits and vegetables, steel,



cement, garments, and textiles have huge potential in Sri Lanka and similarly Sri Lankan tea, and ceramics have a great scope in Pakistan. The business community of both countries needs to step up for efforts to realize all potential areas of business cooperation. He

underscored that countries had signed Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with China and SAARC countries and by enhancing cooperation, Pakistan can get better access to huge markets of ASEAN and China.

He specified that the Indian Ocean is an ocean of strategic competition and strategic convergence, and as a result of the region's strategic competition, Pakistan and Sri Lanka should be much concerned about it. He listed the priorities, such as socio-economic development, economic prosperity, technology acquisition in smaller states in the Indian Ocean, and growing strategic relevance and influence in large States. He said that the Indian Ocean is thus no longer a peaceful region and is becoming increasingly disputed day by day. The world is in need of a continued supply of oil and the ability to transport freight without any obstacles. He narrated the fact that at present, 50% of the world's shipping containers, 70%

of world oil and 35% of high-economic and thus economically relevant mass cargo and security concerns are in the Indian Ocean.

Former Ambassador also addressed the shifting unipolar order in the Indian Ocean to a multipolar world, and asked what are we prepared for this change? Are we ready for multilateral arrangements for security? What we see in the Indian Ocean right now is the insecurity of one or several countries, and we must engage with an unnecessary weapons race in the Indian Ocean.

He acknowledged that the Indian Ocean is an area of strategic mistrust and a strategic deficit region. It is, therefore, the best time to talk and take action, not late.

Mr. Shakeel also affirmed that the animosity between India and Pakistan is a key strategic concern for the Indian Ocean. Both countries are nuclear states and have strong military forces and their military strength are in the process of modernizing. India is concerned about Pakistan's partnership with China, which is Asia's strongest economy and contributing to development projects in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Pakistan, among others. In addition, India is deeply concerned by the theory of the strangulation of China's road belt initiative, which is the largest infrastructure and connectivity project today, but its founder is a developing country, China itself. Bearing in mind that



the projected volume is one trillion USD, many see this initiative as an opportunity to improve the maritime and regional connectivity infrastructure. The World Bank states that only 5 percent of SAARC's GDP is linked, which shows that infrastructure is inadequate.

He was also in agreement with the occurrence of Terrorism in the Indian Ocean as a key issue of the region, especially when Sri Lanka suffering from maritime terrorism, terrorists exploiting the shipping lanes and international marine trade ports throughout the Indian Ocean for three decades. In the Indian Ocean, also the transnational crime of human trafficking is an

area of significant concern. Sri Lanka until the year 2012 was seen as the hub for these practices, but it has not been in this category anymore. Other apprehensions Mr. Shakeel called attention towards were illegal, unauthorized and unreported fishing, which, according to UN estimates, is illegal and destructive of the marine environment, represent 40 percent of total fishing.

He also mentioned the significance of Blue Economy as an obligation for Sri Lanka and all other countries connected to the Indian Ocean. Moreover, there are benefits to Sri Lanka but its position presents challenges too, such as high accessibility of sea resources from a long seashore across the country, close proximity to major maritime lines, sovereignty over an important marine zone as compared with land resources, a wide range of coastal and marine ecosystems and high potential of tourism and recreation industries are the major advantages for a Blue Economy. He identified that in October 2015, the Government of Sri Lanka promoted the 'Sri Lanka NEXT' Blue Economy initiative, which could also be seen as a timely task. In addition, in its central geographical position and the proximity of major waterways, the country aspires to become a maritime hub in the area. He recommended that there are few steps



should be taken into consideration such as the country's image as a tourist destination has been promoted with some success, with its unique maritime and coastal attraction. However, Sri Lanka still has a viable Blue Economic strategy in place that combines the strength of these efforts, despite these ad hoc efforts. He

highlighted that Pakistan is also working on many projects in Baluchistan so it can adopt similar lines to work for progress and prosperity.

Major General Shakeel said while giving an account of the Chinese Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as an ambitious project of regional connectivity and its hoax controversy spread in India. It, therefore, continues to refuse to be a member of the corridor and also cites issues of sovereignty. He also tallied a recent treaty, which was signed by Japan, Australia, and the United States, entitled 'Trilateral Infrastructure Investment Partnership' and deemed it as a communication and fusion arrangement between public and private investments in the Indian

Ocean. Basically, digital connectivity, energy infrastructure, and mutual development goals are to be bolstered.

In this situation, he emphasized that we need rule-based maritime order, respect for international conventions, free movement, and flight, freedom of trade, and we wish to counter maritime risks in order to safeguard maritime freedom. His recommendation was a need for reciprocal security, deeper interoperability, and security cooperation between all of India's actors to prevent the ocean from being dominated and other people from imposing their sovereignty.

In his conclusion, he summed up by stating that it is better for both the states to strengthen their economic ties and enhance their trade. In addition, Sri Lanka has strategic importance in the periphery and there would be a time in the future when both the states have to decide which side they would prefer as the Indian Ocean is occupied with the influence of the greater powers. He asserted that both states should work to strengthen security and economic ties with each other for a collective capacity and capability to move from cooperation to collaboration with inclusive partnerships and an integrated strategy and good governance at sea to maintain a rule-based maritime order.

**His Excellency Mr. Noordeen Mohamed Shaheid-High Commissioner of Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka to Pakistan**



His Excellency Mr. Noordeen Mohamed Shaheid - High Commissioner of Sri Lanka to Pakistan commenced his speech by acknowledging the efforts of General Zahir Ul Islam. His Excellency stated that he respects General Zahir Ul Islam as the shining star who facilitated this program for all of us to celebrate Sri Lanka-Pakistan friendship and it added significantly in the long term stable relationships between the two countries.

He greeted Former High Commissioner of Pakistan to Sri Lanka, General Shakeel Hussain, and admired his statement that we need to put country's relationship at a higher level. He accentuated that he feels honored in to be amongst all the people present in the hall to cherish the long-standing relations between both countries and their masses.

He added that Honorable Minister Mr. Mehboob Sultan was also our chief guest at the commemoration of the 71st independence day of Sri Lanka, made a historical statement to develop relationships between both countries at a higher level.

His Excellency expressed his gratitude for the Center for Global and Strategic Studies, its Chairman General Zahir Ul Islam and credited the success of this program to Executive Director of CGSS Colonel Khalid. He also thanked the staff of CGSS for contributing their efforts to make this event a success.

Mr. Noordeen highlighted the fact that Pakistan and Sri Lanka maintain cordial relations since 1948. He stated that Pakistan achieved independence six months prior to Sri Lanka but diplomatic relations between both commenced since the birth of Sri Lanka as a nation-state in February 1948. He stressed that when Sri Lanka celebrates its independence, the country also celebrates its seven decades of a worthy relationship between both countries. A strong sense of mutual understanding and cooperation always existed between both South Asian nations.

Message of the great founder of Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Quaid-e-Azam M. Ali Jinnah, was quoted by His Excellency stating that:” Pakistan has the warmest goodwill towards Celom and I am sanguine that the good feelings which exist between our two peoples will be further strengthened as the years roll by and our common interest, and mutual and reciprocal handling

of them, will bring us into still closer friendship“. His excellence highly praised the Jinnah as a great man and his statement which according to him is still proximate to the relations between both nations.

According to him, the strong relationship of Sri Lanka and Pakistan was founded by several events occurring over a period of time. DS Senanayake, first Prime Minister of Sri Lanka visited Pakistan right after attainment of country's independence in 1948 and he met Quaid-e-Azam and since then high-level interactions and mutually supportive relations continued with each other in different sectors including health, defense, trade, education, and other social sectors. According to him, this friendship was sealed in 1971 when PM Sirimavo Bandaranayake Pakistan's aircraft flights and refueling in the midst of Indo-Pak war. It was a major risk which could have undermined Sri Lanka's relationship with India because Pakistan



and India are great adversaries and India lies in close geographical proximity to Sri Lanka. He added that nevertheless PM Bandarnayake stood firm and took a bold decision by allowing Pakistan Airforce to touchdown at Sri Lankan Airport. He was of the view that it was due to PM Bandarnayake unprecedented gesture that both countries stood along each other in thick and thin. He added that since then Pakistan has

been generous and spontaneous in her support to Sri Lanka, and Sri Lanka responded back with sincere goodwill towards Pakistan.

He stressed that Sri Lanka set the foundation of lasting friendship between both by extending her support to Pakistan in times of need. The history of defense partnership between both countries dates back to 1971, during the insurrections carried out by Marxist-Leninist organization in Sri Lanka was curbed by Pakistan's military assistance on request of Sri Lankan leadership.

In principle, Sri Lanka had been in the forefront of the non-aligned movement cannot enter into defense alliances with Pakistan or any other country, but the interesting element of defense partnership between both countries is that it is solely driven by mutual trust and friendship, said Mr. Noordeen Shaheid. He added that therefore the military relationship between Sri Lanka and Pakistan carry a unique value to the bilateral relationship between both countries.

Moreover, bilateral defense relations reached its peak during the LTT conflict in Sri Lanka by openly helping Sri Lanka with weapons and training in Pakistan.

He upheld the valuable military assistance of Pakistan to Sri Lanka in times of war and emphasized the fact that Pakistan played a decisive role in eliminating terrorist from the sovereign land of Sri Lanka and we all are thankful for it. He added that in the midst of close defense partnership between both countries, LTT attempt to murder Pakistan's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Colonel Bashir Wali Muhammad, who narrowly escaped the attack but it was a clear sign of the scale of the support by Pakistanis to fight against LTT.

Pakistan still provides military training to Sri Lanka's armed personnel's at its premier defense colleges and this sharing of defense

resources can be seen as an epitome of cooperation between two states in an anarchic regional system. Although both states do not have a formal agreement between Sri Lanka and Pakistan which dictates the terms and conditions of military training arrangements, and training provided



by Pakistan to Sri Lanka has always been mutual friendship and understanding between the defense establishment of both countries. He acknowledged Pakistan's generous support to Sri Lanka to combat terrorism.

He recalled the visit of President Zia-ul-Haq to Sri Lanka and his pledge to provide all required military hardware to combat the terrorists. He also quoted a statement from biography of Army Chief General Tissa Weeratunga who narrated the meeting between President Zia-ul-Haq and his Sri Lankan counterpart stating that "it was inquisitive to know the time gap between such a request and delivery, he added that General Zia-ul-Haq clasped my hand and gave me his contact number and asked me to ring any time of the day and the only delay in reinforcements will be the loading and flight time from Pakistan to Sri Lanka".

His Excellency commended this as a great gesture, whereas trade between both countries represents the key aspect of enduring relationship of Sri Lanka and Pakistan. He also highlighted the fact that Pakistan is Sri Lanka's second biggest trading partner in South Asia.

Both countries signed several trade agreements since their inception and consequently, in 2005, the first free trade agreement was signed between them. However, the economic relationship between both countries has not shown great progress as envisioned by the bilateral agreement.

Sri Lanka once used to be the main source of tea in Pakistan, said by Mr. Noordeen. He added that Pakistan is a top tea consuming nation and Sri Lanka is known for its quality tea production but the trade ratio of this commodity did not reach the expected level. However, Sri Lankan High Commission in Pakistan is trying to promote Sri Lankan Tea in Pakistan and declared the year 2019 as 'Year of Colombo Tea Promotion'.

Along with Sri Lankan tea, His Excellency also endorsed the tourism potential of both countries. He deemed that both nation-states possess a wide array of tourist attractions from deserts to snow lands and religious sites such as the number of Buddhist heritage sites nearby Taxila. He was of the view that in order to meet the optimum level of tourism between both countries, the proliferation of connectivity channels and airlines are needed to be enhanced. He told the audience that currently there isn't any direct flight from Sri Lanka to Islamabad and a similar issue was discussed upon Sri Lankan President's visit to Pakistan that in order to promote the religious tourism direct flights should be started between capital cities of both nations.

By concluding his speech he said that there is a need to revisit the contents of free trade



agreement and identify new avenues of business between two countries. In addition, businessmen and entrepreneurs should be made aware of potential business opportunities such as the power and energy sector, gems and jewels, hospitality and tourism industry. He also stressed

that free-trade agreement should be revised and expanded from goods to services sector and investments. Given the goodwill prevailing between the two countries, there is much potential for future growth.

In the end, he inferred that Sri Lanka and Pakistan have natural love and affection and whenever we meet each other, it is explicitly clear from our facial expression and attitude towards each other. Therefore this relation should be taken to another generation so that this friendship will continue forever.

