

India Srilanka ties

Why in news?

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Sri Lankan Prime Minister meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi, on his third visit to the capital since January 2015.

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What happened and what must be done?

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- Both PM's flagged off partnerships in a host of economic and development projects through a Memorandum of Understanding, ranging from energy and infrastructure to special economic zones.

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- Both countries ties are **centred around economic and security concerns**, and far less on political matters.

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- Preoccupied with an ever-growing Chinese presence in Sri Lanka, India has been channelling its energies towards countering it, especially **focussing on Trincomalee**.

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- India and Sri Lanka have agreed to jointly revive a World War II era oil storage facility in the **strategically located eastern port town** and build infrastructure around it.

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- India has pledged **\$2.6 billion in development assistance** to Sri Lanka, but should also explore the potential for generating livelihoods in the war-battered northern economy where agriculture and fisheries, are facing a crisis.

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- Both countries **should also concentrate on political concerns** in the island nation where scores of Tamils and Muslims in the north and east are yet to return to normal lives eight years after the civil war ended.

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- Hundreds of people have been protesting, voicing concern about the

mysterious disappearance of their relatives and about their **land still under military occupation.**

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- India must continue to closely engage on these fronts and build a holistic relationship that transcends the mere transactional.

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- Resolving the long-standing Palk Bay conflict between fishermen of both countries is central to this, and New Delhi must address the valid concern of Sri Lankan Tamil fishermen about incursions from Tamil Nadu into Sri Lankan waters.

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- Several factories in the north, destroyed or defunct during the war, await attention and investment.

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- While New Delhi's anxiety over Chinese presence might be justified, it **should avoid using the China lens to view Sri Lanka**, respecting the country's autonomy to engage with any willing partner.

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- The more India treats Sri Lanka as an equal partner, the stronger the relationship is likely to grow.

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Source: The Hindu

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