

Bolstering Bilateral Ties Between India and Sri Lanka: After 40 years, India Sri Lanka Ferry Services Restarted

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What's in Today's Article?

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- Maritime Linkage Between India and Sri Lanka
- Potential Impact of the New Service
- Operational Challenges

Why in News?

- An age-old sea route between India and Sri Lanka has been rejuvenated with the inauguration of a passenger ferry service – a High Speed Craft, named 'Cheriyapani', from Nagapattinam (TN) to Kankesanthurai in Jaffna, Northern Sri Lanka.

- The initiative is aimed at bolstering bilateral ties, boosting tourism, increasing people-to-people relations and is expected to benefit local traders on both shores.

Maritime Linkage Between India and Sri Lanka:

- The Indo-Ceylon Express or Boat Mail – a train – ran between Chennai and Colombo via the Thoothukudi port from the early 1900s up until 1982.
 - Passengers from Chennai would get onto the train and then transfer to a coal-powered steam ferry in Dhanushkodi, which would take them to Talaimannar in roughly two hours.
 - However, the civil war in Sri Lanka resulted in the halting of these services.
- The resumption of ferry services has been on the cards for quite some time, especially after the war ended in 2009.
- A MoU concerning passenger transportation by sea was signed in 2011 and a similar service was launched.
 - However, it did not last for more than six months due to poor response.
- Attempts were also made to establish services from Rameswaram to Talaimannar and Karaikal to Kankesanthurai. Various challenges kept these proposals from materialising.

Potential Impact of the New Service:

- By providing a transportation option, the ferry can amplify religious tourism in the coastal regions of both countries.
- From India, travellers can access significant religious sites in Colombo and the southern parts of Sri Lanka.
- Indian pilgrim centres such as Nagapattinam, Nagore, Velankanni, Thirunallar, and temple towns such as Thanjavur, Madurai, and Tiruchi are expected to see an influx of Lankan tourists.
- Beyond religious tourism, the services would boost regional commerce and trade.
- Anticipating the influx of travellers, the state government of Tamil Nadu is ramping up infrastructural developments.
 - For example, the Nagapattinam port, under the Tamil Nadu Maritime Board, was upgraded recently with funds worth Rs 8 crore from the Union Ministry of External Affairs.
- Launching the service, the Indian PM said that connectivity is not only about bringing two cities closer but also brings two countries, its people closer.
- Sri Lankan President called the revival of the ferry service an important step towards strengthening connectivity between India and Sri Lanka.

Operational Challenges:

- The Shipping Corporation of India's (SCI) initial plan to run services every day for 10 days has been rescheduled to operate thrice a week.
- While the onset of the northeast monsoon is one of the reasons being cited, sources at Nagapattinam port said the ticket fare (~Rs 7,670) and poor ticketing systems are also a challenge.
- Therefore, the ticket rates should be reduced and booking should be made available on popular travel sites if the service is meant to succeed.

Q1) Write a short note on India Sri Lanka relations?

Sri Lanka is India's largest trade partner in South Asia. India in turn is Sri Lanka's largest trade partner globally. Trade between the two countries grew particularly rapidly after the entry into force of the India-Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement in March 2000.

Q2) What is the 13th Amendment to the Constitution of Sri Lanka?

Passed in 1987 as a part of the India-Lanka accord, the 13th amendment created the Provincial Council system in Sri Lanka and devolved powers over land, the police, education, health, agriculture, housing and finances to the provinces.

Source: [After 40 years, India Sri Lanka ferry services restarted: opportunities, challenges](#)

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