

Ties with Sri Lanka moved ahead after President Sirisena took over: Indian High Commissioner

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Colombo: Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka YK Sinha today said that India's ties with its southern neighbor Sri Lanka moved ahead after Maithripala Sirisena replaced Mahinda Rajapaksa in January 2015 as the President of Sri Lanka.

Maithripala Sirisena

Sinha further said that bilateral ties have become robust and entered a new phase with highest-level engagements.

Recalling a flurry of high-level visits between the two South Asian neighbours across the Palk Strait, Sinha said ties entered a new phase since Sirisena took over from Rajapaksa.

Sri Lankan exports have grown 13 times since the FTA was signed in 1999. This will show who has benefited most, the Indian ambassador said.

Sri Lanka and India enjoys a robust partnership and New Delhi is Colombos largest partner in defence training, he said.

On the fishermen issue, Sinha said it was a humanitarian issue with implications on the livelihoods of those involved.

Negotiations are continuing to try and resolve the issue of fishermen of the two countries crossing the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL), he said.

He said Sri Lankas security is in Indias interest.

India stresses the need for reconciliation in Sri Lanka through a negotiated political settlement where all communities can agree. This must be within the framework of a united Sri Lanka, Sinha said.

Sirisena has taken steps to reconcile with the Tamil minority.

Several confidence-building-measures such as the release of Tamils-owned lands, lifting of travel restrictions to the North and de-escalating the military presence have been taken since January as part of efforts to ensure reconciliation after three decades of civil war with the LTTE that claimed more than 100,000 lives.

- (With PTI inputs)