



THE PARLIAMENT OF THE  
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

# Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to Malaysia and to Sri Lanka

5 December to 14 December 2011

October 2012



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The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation  
Malaysia and Sri Lanka

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Canberra

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## Membership of the Delegation

Leader	Ms Maria Vamvakinou MP	Member for Calwell
Deputy Leader	Mr Rowan Ramsey MP	Member for Grey
Members	Mr Harry Jenkins MP	Member for Scullin
	Senator Helen Kroger	Senator for Victoria
	Dr Andrew Southcott MP	Member for Boothby
	Ms Siwan Davies	Delegation Secretary

The Delegation was accompanied by Mrs Teresa Ramsey.



## Introduction

- 1.1 The visit of a delegation from the Parliament of Australia to Malaysia and Sri Lanka between 5 and 14 December 2011 reaffirmed already strong ties with both countries.
- 1.2 Australia shares with Malaysia and Sri Lanka membership of the Commonwealth and similar parliamentary systems, as well as frank and constructive bilateral dialogues sustained through ongoing parliamentary exchanges and visits.
- 1.3 Visits to Malaysia have become more frequent as a consequence of the ASEAN bilateral delegation program.<sup>1</sup> On the delegation's visit, the program provided a good overview of the Malaysia-Australia relationship, particularly in relation to higher education, defence and trade.
- 1.4 The visit to Sri Lanka was the first official visit by an Australian Parliamentary delegation since the military victory by the Sri Lankan army over the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in May 2009. The last delegation visited in 2003,<sup>2</sup> during the ceasefire. The visit gave the delegation an unprecedented insight into Sri Lanka's current political, economic and social situation and the challenges of reconciliation and a achieving sustainable peace.
- 1.5 The delegation was warmly received in each country and had significant access to senior decision makers, local officials and community

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1 See Parliament of Australia, 2009, *Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the Philippines, Cambodia and Malaysia*, September 2009; Parliament of Australia, *Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to Malaysia and Japan*, August 2006.

2 Parliament of Australia, 2003, *Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to Sri Lanka and to the 49<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, Bangladesh*.

representatives. The parliaments of both nations were generous with their time and hospitality.

- 1.6 This is a report of the delegation's activities in both countries. **Chapter 2** reports on Malaysia, and **Chapter 3** reports on Sri Lanka. Details of the program in Malaysia are at **Appendix A**; the program for Sri Lanka is at **Appendix B**. The text of a media release issued in Sri Lanka is at **Appendix C**.

## Aims and objectives of the visits

- 1.7 The delegation's visit to Malaysia had the following objectives for the visit:
- Renew contacts with Malaysia's parliament and explore further avenues for dialogue and co-operation;
  - Gain an enhanced understanding of multi-level governance and discuss recent political developments;
  - Review the progress of Australia-Malaysia educational co-operation;
  - Consider national and regional efforts to deal with transnational issues, including defence and security, and refugees and asylum seekers; and
  - Explore topical issues concerning trade and investment between Australia and Malaysia.
- 1.8 The delegation's visit to Sri Lanka had the following objectives:
- Renew links with the Parliament, and assess progress towards establishing a Parliamentary Select Committee on Devolution;
  - Gain an enhanced understanding of political, economic and social factors associated with reconciliation, following the civil conflict;
  - Consider the humanitarian, infrastructure and security aspects of the rehabilitation, resettlement and reconstruction efforts, particularly in relation to persons displaced by the conflict;
  - Visit Australian funded aid projects in the North of the country; and
  - Explore the potential for enhanced trade and investment, including higher education, between Australia and Sri Lanka.

## Appreciation

- 1.9 For its visit to Malaysia, the delegation records its gratitude to:

- the Speaker and members of the Malaysian Parliament for hosting the delegation;
- all those who took time to meet with the delegation in Malaysia, including federal and state government ministers, UN officials, the Monash University leadership team, journalists, ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Dialogue participants, and Australian Defence Force personnel;
- the Australian High Commission in Kuala Lumpur, in particular the High Commissioner to Malaysia, Miles Kupa, Deputy High Commissioner Jane Duke, Arthur Spyrou, Anthea Lawrence and Clare Derrington; and
- officers of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for their oral and written briefings in Canberra.

1.10 For its visit to Sri Lanka, the delegation records its gratitude to:

- the Speaker and members of the Sri Lankan Parliament for hosting the delegation, and to Secretary General of the Sri Lankan Parliament, Dhammika Kitulgoda, and parliamentary officers Upali Kumarasinghe and Shahran Ilyas for their assistance to the delegation;
- His Excellency, Admiral Thisara Samarasinghe, Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Australia for his hospitality and assistance;
- all those who took time to meet with the delegation in Sri Lanka, including government ministers, representatives of political parties, government officials, security force personnel, and community representatives;
- all agencies involved in arranging the visit to the Jaffna and Kilinochchi district in the North of Sri Lanka, in particular Sally Mackay of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID);
- the Australian High Commission in Colombo. The delegation applauds the contribution of the former High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, Kathy Klugman, and sincerely thanks Deputy High Commissioner Sonia Koppe, Natalia Aueb-Charles and Nazreen Marikkar for their assistance; and
- officers of DFAT and AusAID for their oral and written briefings in Canberra.





## Malaysia

### Malaysia at a glance

Official Name	Malaysia
Form of State	Federal parliamentary democracy with a constitutional monarch
Head of State	HM The Yang Di-Pertuan Agong XIII Al Wathiqu Billah Tuanku Mizan Zainal Abidin Al-Marhum Sultan Mahmud Al-Muktafi Billah Shah
Prime Minister	YAB Dato' Sri Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak
National Legislature	Bicameral parliament: 70 Members of the Senate (Dewan Negara) and 222 Members of the House of Representatives (Dewan Rakyat). Legislative power is divided between federal and state legislatures.
Capital	Kuala Lumpur
Language	Malay
Population	28.7 million (2011)
Land area	330 thousand sq km
GDP	US\$ 305.8 billion (2012 forecast)
GDP per capita	US\$ 10,467 (2012 forecast)
GDP growth	4.4% (2012 forecast)
Current Account Balance	US\$m 33,088 (2012 forecast)
Inflation	2.7% (2012 forecast)

## Background<sup>1</sup>

### Geography and population

- 2.1 Situated in the heart of South-east Asia, just north of the equator, Malaysia borders Thailand, Indonesia and Brunei, and has maritime borders with Indonesia, Singapore and the Philippines. With a tropical climate, West Malaysia (area 131, 794 square km) and East Malaysia (198,000 square km) are composed of forested mountains descending to coastal plains.
- 2.2 The total population of 28.25 million (as of July 2010) is divided between three predominant ethnic groups: Malay (55 per cent), ethnic Chinese (24 per cent) and ethnic Indian (7 per cent). Indigenous groups and others comprise the remaining 13 per cent.
- 2.3 The official language is Bahasa Malaysia, although English is widely used. Within the respective ethnic communities, a range of Chinese and Tamil dialects are also spoken.
- 2.4 Today, Malaysia is known for the cultural and religious diversity of its population. While Sunni Islam is the official religion, enshrined in the Malaysian constitution, several other religions are practiced including Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Taoism and various tribal religions.

### History and role in the region

- 2.5 Malaysia's history is closely related to its geography. Following a century of British colonial rule, the Federation of Malaya was established on 31 August 1957. Six years later, the federation was enlarged with the inclusion of the island state of Singapore, and the states Sabah and Sarawak which both share a border with Indonesia, and the country was renamed 'Malaysia'. In 1965 Singapore left the Federation.
- 2.6 Along with Indonesia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand, Malaysia was one of the five signature countries establishing the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967. As of 2012, ASEAN has a membership of ten nations, although it works with a number of other countries in the region through separate organisations such as the ASEAN Plus Three (with the People's Republic of China, Japan and South Korea) and the East Asia Summit (with China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and the United States of America). As the

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1 The information in this background has been drawn largely from a brief prepared for the delegation by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

first country to establish a formal relationship with ASEAN in 1974, Australia has often been seen as ‘a strong and constructive’ partner.<sup>2</sup>

## Political and parliamentary structure

- 2.7 Malaysia is a federal constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary democracy.
- 2.8 Drawing on its legacy of British colonial rule, the bicameral Parliament of Malaysia is modelled on the Westminster system, and consists of the House of Representatives or *Dewan Rakyat* (literally the “Chamber of the People”) and the Senate or *Dewan Negara* (literally the “Chamber of the Nation”). Executive power rests with the Prime Minister, elected by the party with a majority share of the seats in the lower house.
- 2.9 The Malaysian Senate is an indirectly elected body. The Constitution allows for a maximum of 70 Senators with terms of three years. Twenty-six senators are indirectly elected by the states (two senators per state), and the remaining 44 are appointed by the Yang di-Pertuan Agong (King), following the Prime Minister's recommendation. The 222 representatives of the lower house are elected from single-member districts by a first-past-the-post system, for terms lasting up to five years.
- 2.10 As in other Westminster parliaments, government is formed by the party (or coalition of parties) which holds a majority in the lower house. The current Government of Malaysia is formed from a coalition of individual political parties that are largely composed of members from one cultural ethnicity: the United Malays National Organisation (Malay), the Malaysian Chinese Association (Chinese), the United Bumiputera Heritage Party (Sarawak natives including the Iban, Bidayuh and Dayak people), the Sarawak United People’s Party (Chinese from Sarawak), the United Pasokmomogun Kadazandusun Murut Organisation (the indigenous Kadazan-Dusun people and Orang Asli of Sabah), the Sarawak Progressive Democratic Party (Malay from Sarawak), the Malaysian Indian Congress (Indian), the Sabah United Party (the indigenous Kadazan-Dusun people of Sabah), and the Liberal Democratic Party (Chinese from Sabah).
- 2.11 There are more women in the Malaysian Senate (22.7 per cent), than in the House of Representatives (10.4 per cent), a feature common to Australia.

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2 Joint Press Statement, Meeting of the ASEAN Heads of Government and the Prime Minister of Australia, 1977  
[http://www.dfat.gov.au/asean/ASEAN\\_Heads\\_of\\_Gov\\_PM\\_1977\\_Joint\\_Statement.pdf](http://www.dfat.gov.au/asean/ASEAN_Heads_of_Gov_PM_1977_Joint_Statement.pdf),  
[accessed 9 August 2012]

- 2.12 Malaysia has thirteen states and three federal territories. Nine of the thirteen states have hereditary rulers. Legislative power is divided between the federal (bicameral) and state legislatures (all unicameral).

### **The economy, trade and development**

- 2.13 Malaysia's economy is the third largest in South-east Asia (after Indonesia and Thailand) and has grown steadily since recovering from the Asian financial crisis (1997-98). The country is one of the world's largest producers of electronic and electrical products. Malaysia's GDP per capita is now about US\$8,423 (2010) and the country is considered to be a 'high middle income' economy. The government's 'Vision 2020' policy aims to achieve high income status for the country by 2020.<sup>3</sup> The Economist Intelligence Unit has forecast ongoing growth in the period 2012-2015 of 5.5 per cent per year.<sup>4</sup>
- 2.14 On numerous indicators of human development, Malaysia has achieved marked success since independence. Malaysia is currently considered a country of high human development, and is one of only four countries in Asia to have achieved such status.<sup>5</sup> Between 1980 and 2007 Malaysia's human development index rose by 0.81 per cent annually from 0.666 to 0.829 today. By 2009, its life expectancy at birth was 74.1 years, and the country's adult literacy rate (for those 15 and over) was 91.9 per cent.<sup>6</sup>

### **Delegation activities**

- 2.15 The delegation met with a range of people to discuss issues relating to bilateral and parliamentary relations, higher education, ASEAN, trade and development, and transnational issues, including defence and security, and refugees and asylum seekers.

### **Bilateral and parliamentary relations**

- 2.16 Australia has a wide ranging relationship with Malaysia. Exchanges at senior political level are frequent, including a visit to Australia by Malaysian Prime Minister Najib in March 2011 following Prime Minister

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3 Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 'Malaysia country brief', at [http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/malaysia/malaysia\\_brief.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/malaysia/malaysia_brief.html), [accessed 9 August 2012]

4 Economist Intelligence Unit, 'Country Report Malaysia October 2011', p 7.

5 The others are South Korea, Japan and Singapore. The HDR also includes Hong Kong separately.

6 Human Development Report, 2009, Country Report: Malaysia, [http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country\\_fact\\_sheets/cty\\_fs\\_MYS.html](http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_MYS.html)



Julia Gillard's visit to Malaysia in November 2010, annual attendance by both Prime Ministers at APEC and the East Asia Summit and biennial attendance at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM). Parliamentary delegations to and from Malaysia are also frequent.<sup>7</sup>

- 2.17 Through its discussions with senior parliamentarians, the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chief Minister of Penang, the delegation sought to:
- renew contacts with Malaysia's Parliament and explore further avenues for dialogue and co-operation; and
  - gain an enhanced understanding of multi-level governance and discuss recent political developments.

#### Malaysian Parliament

- 2.18 Malaysia's parliamentary, legal and administrative systems share many similar features with those of Australia, as a result of the two countries' membership of the Commonwealth.
- 2.19 At the Malaysian Parliament, the delegation met with the Deputy Speaker and Members of Parliament.
- 2.20 The meeting allowed for an exchange of personal experiences of being members of parliament, issues or respective constituency and personal interest. Topical issues were also discussed and included palm oil, the Lynas Corp's plant and the refugee transfer agreement.
- 2.21 The Malaysian Parliament House had been built in 1963, and was now being redeveloped, a proposed new building in Putrajaya having been ruled out, as parliamentarians preferred to remain at the current location.
- 2.22 Parliamentary elections in Malaysia are held every five years. The next elections are required to be held no later than April 2013, although they are expected to be held earlier. At the time of the delegation's visit, the Leader of the Opposition, Dato' Seri Anwar bin Ibrahim, faced criminal charges of sodomy, which Anwar has claimed to be politically motivated. Anwar was later acquitted of the charges, but the prosecution has since filed an appeal against the acquittal.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> See *Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to Malaysia and Japan*, August 2006; *Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the 54<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Parliamentary Association Conference and to Thailand*, October 2008; *Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to the Philippines, Cambodia and Malaysia*, September 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Aljazeera, 9 January 2012, 'Anwar Ibrahim found not guilty of sodomy', <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia-pacific/2012/01/201219295952572.html> [accessed 9 August 2012].

## State Government - Penang

- 2.23 To better appreciate the federal system in Malaysia, the delegation visited Penang, an Opposition-led state.
- 2.24 The delegation met with the Chief Minister of Penang and federal Member of Parliament for Bukit Bendera (Penang).
- 2.25 The Chief Minister described some of the initiatives he had instituted in the state, including a twice weekly 'Speaker's corner' and a Freedom of Information Act, which had opened up public documents and government tenders. State Government debt had been reduced by 95 per cent, and wealth redistribution to those on minimum incomes.
- 2.26 Penang aimed to become a 'liveable' city, so as to retain local talent and attract foreign investment (rather than offering land and tax concessions). Small Medium Enterprises were supported by government subsidies and mentoring. Future economic drivers would be tourism and services.
- 2.27 The delegation canvassed Malaysia - Australia relations, and noted that both politicians had studied in Australia. The formalised sister-city arrangement between Adelaide and the city of Georgetown in Penang were also discussed.<sup>9</sup>



*Delegation meets with Rt Hon Lim Guan Eng and Mr Liew Chin Tong, 6 December 2011*

*Source C B Lim, Special Assistant to the Chief Minister of Penang*

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9 The arrangement originates in the fact that William Light, the son of Francis Light who acquired Penang on behalf of the British East India Company in 1786, planned the city of Adelaide in 1837.

## Media

- 2.28 The delegation met with senior local and foreign journalists from independent media outlets to discuss current Malaysian political issues.
- 2.29 It was noted that legal reforms on press freedom and freedom of assembly had been proposed by the Prime Minister of Malaysia, but currently the main newspapers were owned by the government and political parties in the ruling coalition.

## Higher education

- 2.30 Education is a major focus of the bilateral relationship, with 23,000 Malaysian enrolments received in 2010 by educational institutions in Australia and more than 15,000 additional students studying at campuses of Australian institutions based in Malaysia. Australia is one of the principal beneficiaries of scholarships for Malaysian students.
- 2.31 Monash University, Swinburne University of Technology and Curtin University each have campuses in Malaysia.
- 2.32 The Malaysian education sector has seen an increase in the number of international students, mostly from the countries of the Middle East.
- 2.33 By visiting the Monash University Sunway Campus, the delegation aimed to:
- review the progress of Australia-Malaysia educational cooperation.
- 2.34 The delegation met with the Pro Vice-Chancellor and senior leadership team, and toured the facilities.
- 2.35 Governance, funding arrangements and cultural differences between the Australian and Malaysian student experience were discussed. The delegation noted that the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Executive Director reported to the Board of a joint venture company established by Monash University and the Sunway Group, which was subject to both Australian and Malaysian audit.
- 2.36 There was currently no student politics, but students belonged to societies and multi-faith groups, and were represented on all campus committees. Recent legislative changes would allow persons under aged 21 to join political parties and engage in political discourse.
- 2.37 The delegation was advised that 160 Australian students were on exchange to universities in Malaysia.

## ASEAN, trade and investment

- 2.38 Malaysia is Australia's third largest trade partner in ASEAN and tenth largest partner overall, with two-way trade worth \$16 billion in 2011.
- 2.39 Malaysia and Australia are both parties to the ASEAN Australia New Zealand Free Trade Agreement (AANZFTA), which entered into force in January 2010.
- 2.40 At the time of the delegation's visit, negotiations were underway for a bilateral free trade agreement between Australia and Malaysia. On 22 May 2012, the Australian Minister for Trade and Competitiveness, Craig Emerson, and Malaysia's Minister for Trade and Industry, Mustapa Mohamed, signed the Malaysia-Australia Free Trade Agreement (MAFTA) in Kuala Lumpur.<sup>10</sup>
- 2.41 The delegation welcomed the opportunity to meet with participants from the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Dialogue, and Malaysia-based Heads of Mission, where they discussed topical issues in foreign and strategic policy in the Asia Pacific region.
- 2.42 Through its meetings with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, the delegation aimed to:
- explore topical issues concerning trade and investment between Australia and Malaysia.
- 2.43 The delegation was briefed on the strong Malaysian economy, although it was apparent that some challenges remained. Malaysia was keen to become more sophisticated in its exporting, and to attract and retain a skilled workforce in light of the significant migration of well educated Malaysians to other countries (referred to as the 'brain drain').
- 2.44 Two further issues were raised in discussions with the delegation regarding trade and investment: the palm oil industry and Lynas Corp's rare earth refinery in Malaysia.

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10 The full text of the agreement is available at:  
<http://www.dfat.gov.au/fta/mafta/index.html#full-text> [accessed 9 August 2012]





*Delegation meets with Hon Datuk Richard Riot anak Jaem, accompanied by His Excellency Miles Kupa, Mrs Jane Duke, and Mr Khairi Bin Omar, 8 December 2011*

## Palm oil

- 2.45 The oil palm tree, originally from West Africa, was introduced to Malaysia (then Malaya) by the British in the early 1870s. According to the Malaysian Palm Oil Council, just less than 4.5 million hectares of land in Malaysia is under oil palm cultivation; producing 17.73 million tonnes of palm oil and 2.13 tonnes of palm kernel oil.<sup>11</sup> Today, Malaysia accounts for 39 per cent of world palm oil production and 44 per cent of world exports.
- 2.46 The Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs remarked that the palm oil industry was reducing poverty, particularly amongst indigenous communities. Conservation measures required 56 per cent of native forests to be retained, with 21 per cent set aside for agriculture, and 10 per cent available for development.
- 2.47 In 2010, Australian Senators Xenophon (Independent) and Bob Brown (Greens) introduced into the Senate a bill to develop and approve labelling standards used by food producers, manufacturers and distributors of food

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11 Malaysian Palm Oil Council, [http://www.mpoc.org.my/The\\_Oil\\_Palm\\_Tree.aspx](http://www.mpoc.org.my/The_Oil_Palm_Tree.aspx) and [http://www.mpoc.org.my/Malaysian\\_Palm\\_Oil\\_Industry.aspx](http://www.mpoc.org.my/Malaysian_Palm_Oil_Industry.aspx) [accessed 9 August 2012].

containing palm oil. In the bill's explanatory memorandum, the Senators outlined their concern that the production of palm oil results in extensive deforestation and, as a consequence, the removal of wildlife habitat, namely the endangered Orang-utan.

- 2.48 The bill passed the Senate. Following its introduction to the House of Representatives, the bill was referred to the Standing Committee on Economics for consideration and report. The report recommended that the bill not be passed by the House of Representatives. The bill was subsequently removed from the *Notice Paper*.
- 2.49 The bill was an issue of concern to Malaysian parliamentarians who were largely supportive of the palm oil industry, and sparked some discussion with members of the delegation.

#### Lynas Corp refinery

- 2.50 As stated on its website, Lynas Corporation Ltd aims to 'create a reliable, fully integrated source of Rare Earths from mine through to market, and to become the benchmark for the security of supply and environmental standards in the global Rare Earths industry'.<sup>12</sup>
- 2.51 Lynas has a plant at Mount Weld in Western Australia and is constructing a Rare Earths processing plant – known as the Lynas Advanced Materials Plant (LAMP) – near Kuantan in Pahang, Malaysia.
- 2.52 The delegation noted that the status of this refinery in Malaysia was subject to parliamentary deliberation. The project had Government support, but there were local objections.

#### Defence and security

- 2.53 Australia has significant military cooperation with Malaysia and is a major source of external military training. This presence was important in the reconstruction efforts to the region following the 2004 tsunami. In 2011, celebrations were held for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Five Power Defence Arrangements (Australia, New Zealand, the UK, Malaysia and Singapore) which have provided an overarching framework for close cooperation in defence and security.
- 2.54 In relation to defence and security, the aims of the delegation were to:
- share perspectives on the future of the East Asia Summit and other regional groupings as a means of enhancing regional economic and security cooperation; and

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12 Foundations for the Future (webpage), Lynas Corporation, [http://www.lynascorp.com/category.asp?category\\_id=2](http://www.lynascorp.com/category.asp?category_id=2), [accessed 9 August 2012]

- gain an enhanced appreciation of national and regional efforts to deal with transnational issues; including terrorism, narcotics, people trafficking and unauthorised people movements, and health issues.

#### Butterworth RAAF Base visit

- 2.55 The delegation visited Butterworth RAAF Base, was briefed by the Acting Commanding Officer 324 Combat Support Squadron, and met Australian Defence Force personnel.
- 2.56 The delegation was briefed on the evolving nature of defence co-operation between Australia and Malaysia and the significance of Butterworth to the Five Power Defence Arrangements. Butterworth was valuable for supporting training exercises conducted by Australian and Malaysian military personnel.



*Delegation visits RAAF Butterworth, 6 December 2011*

## The work of the United Nations in Malaysia

- 2.57 As Malaysia is ranked a 'high' middle income country, the United Nations (UN) had more of a policy role, rather than an operational role, in the country. The delegation met with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Representative for Malaysia, and representative of the United National High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).
- 2.58 The delegation was briefed on the work of the 700 staff across ten UN agencies in Malaysia. While some agencies worked specifically on issues affecting Malaysia, others were either regionally- or globally-focused.
- 2.59 The UNDP, for example, worked mainly at the policy level on issues such as the economy, poverty, climate change, and governance. The UN Fund for Children (UNICEF) focused predominantly on stateless children, the World Health Organisation (WHO) on communicable diseases and the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) on general and reproductive health rights.
- 2.60 Of the nine core international human rights conventions, Malaysia has signed three; some of these with reservations.

## Refugees and asylum seekers

- 2.61 The UNHCR, the body responsible for refugees and asylum seekers, was originally established in Malaysia to assist in the resettlement of Vietnamese boat people. Since then, it has broadened its scope and function, and now plays a key role in registering asylum seekers arriving in Malaysia, and improving living conditions for refugees in Malaysia.
- 2.62 A recent initiative has been implementing the '6P program' to register illegal immigrants. It is estimated that 4 million migrants live in Malaysia - many of whom are considered 'illegal workers' - predominantly from Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and Somalia. The UNHCR told the delegation that there were 96,000 registered refugees; a marked increase from the 40,000 registered refugees reported in 2005.<sup>13</sup>
- 2.63 The United States of America takes the greatest number of refugees from Malaysia, followed by Australia, Denmark, Canada and Norway. The UNHCR noted that fewer refugees were going to detention centres than previously.
- 2.64 The delegation was advised that the International Labour Organisation (ILO) would open a new position in Malaysia, which would focus on the rights of migrant workers.

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13 Parliament of Australia, 2006, 'Report of the Australian Parliamentary Delegation to Malaysia and Japan', p. 20.



- 2.65 On 25 July 2011, the Australian and Malaysian governments signed an arrangement to provide for the transfer from Australia to Malaysia of up to 800 irregular maritime arrivals and formalises Australia's commitment to accept 1000 additional genuine refugees from Malaysia every year for the following four years.<sup>14</sup>
- 2.66 The delegation had extensive discussions with representatives of the UN agencies on the subject of refugees and asylum seekers. Specific concerns raised related to the resettlement of refugees, awareness raising among refugees of the work of the UNHCR, and illegal trafficking of persons to work in plantations, construction and the domestic sphere.

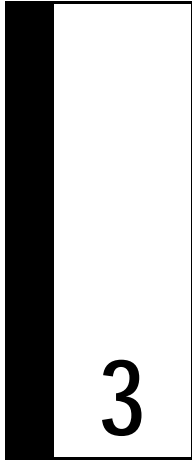
## Conclusion

- 2.67 The visit underlined the multi-dimensional nature of Malaysia-Australia relations, and served to strengthen institutional ties between the Parliaments.
- 2.68 The delegation supports freedom of expression in Malaysia's ethnically- and religiously- diverse society.

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14 The Hon Chris Bowen, MP, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, 'Australia and Malaysia sign transfer deal', 25 July 2011, <http://www.minister.immi.gov.au/media/cb/2011/cb168739.htm>, [accessed 9 August 2012]





## Sri Lanka

### Sri Lanka at a glance

Official Name	Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka
Form of State	Republic with a presidential-parliamentary system
Head of State	President HE Mahinda Rajapaksa
Prime Minister	The Hon D M Jayaratne
National Legislature	Since 1978, unicameral Parliament of 225 Members
Capital	Colombo
Languages	Sinhala, Tamil
Population	20.5 million (2011)
Land area	66 thousand sq km
GDP	US\$ 64.9 billion (2012 forecast)
GDP per capita	US\$ 3,139 (2012 forecast)
GDP growth	7.5% (2012 forecast)
Current Account Balance	US\$ -4,734 million (2012 forecast)
Inflation	7.5%

## Background<sup>1</sup>

### Geography and population

- 3.1 Sri Lanka (formerly Ceylon) is an island separated from the Indian subcontinent by the Palk Strait, north of the equator.
- 3.2 While its population approximates that of Australia's (20.5 million), its land size resembles that of Tasmania. The high density population is spread mainly across three cities: Colombo (the capital, with 2.2 million people), Gampaha (2 million people), Kurunegala (1.4 million people) and Kandy (1.2 million people).
- 3.3 Sri Lankans are predominantly Buddhist (69 per cent), although Hinduism, Christianity and Islam are also practiced.

### Political history and parliamentary structure

- 3.4 Reflecting its prominent position along sea trade routes, Sri Lanka's history is marked by centuries of Portuguese, Dutch and British colonisation.
- 3.5 Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948. Since then, there has been significant change in the country's political and parliamentary system. Between 1944 and 1971, the Parliament consisted of the Queen (represented by the Governor-General) and two Houses, namely the Senate and the House of Representatives. The House of Representatives consisted of 101 Members and the Senate consisted of 30 Members, of whom 15 were elected by the House of Representatives and 15 nominated by the Governor-General. The Senate was abolished on 2 October 1971.
- 3.1 In 1978, the Constitution was amended to allow for a presidential-parliamentary system, with a concentration of powers in an executive President who may serve no more than two six-year terms. The Office of Prime Minister, and a Cabinet drawn from Parliament, were retained but were made subordinate to the President. It was at this time that the country was renamed the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka.
- 3.2 On 26 January 2010, Presidential elections were held nation-wide—the first time in over two decades. The elections returned Mr Rajapaksa for a second six-year term as the President of Sri Lanka.
- 3.3 On 8 April 2010, parliamentary elections began. The formal election results were announced by the Elections Commissioner on 21 April, following re-polling on 20 April in two districts. President Rajapaksa's United People's

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1 The information in this background has been drawn largely from a brief prepared for the delegation by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Freedom Alliance (UPFA) won with 144 seats (64 per cent). Hon D.M. Jayaratne was sworn in as the new Prime Minister of Sri Lanka.

3.4 Thirteen of the 225 members elected (5.8 per cent) were women.

### Civil conflict and reconciliation process

3.5 From mid 1983, Sri Lanka was afflicted by a serious civil conflict between the government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). Hundreds of thousands of people were displaced by the fighting and it is estimated that tens of thousands of people were killed.

3.6 An indefinite ceasefire agreement was signed in February 2002, but broken in 2004, following a split between the eastern and northern 'wings' of the LTTE. The then Sri Lankan Foreign Minister, Mr Lakshman Kadirgamar, was assassinated on 12 August 2005 in Colombo. Violence escalated in December 2005 and January 2006, including attacks by the LTTE in the north and east.

3.7 By April 2009, the Sri Lankan Government had reclaimed all areas under LTTE control except for a small area of land on the northeast coast. On 18 May 2009, the Defence Ministry announced that LTTE leader Prabhakaran and several other senior LTTE leaders had been killed in fighting. Consequently, the Sri Lankan Government formally announced its military victory over the LTTE and its regaining of complete territorial control over Sri Lanka. On 19 May 2009, President Rajapaksa delivered a victory speech to Parliament.

3.8 In 2010, the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission (LLRC) was appointed as a commission of inquiry by President Rajapaksa. The commission was mandated to investigate the facts and circumstances which led to the failure of the ceasefire agreement made operational on 27 February 2002, the lessons that should be learnt from those events and the institutional, administrative and legislative measures which needed to be taken in order to prevent any recurrence of such concerns in the future, and to promote further national unity and reconciliation among all communities. After an 18-month inquiry, the commission submitted its report to the President on 15 November 2011. The report was made public on 16 December 2011, after being tabled in the Parliament.

### The economy, trade and development

3.9 Sri Lanka is characterised by high levels of literacy (91 per cent) and life expectancy (75 years), and a low rate of infant mortality (14 per 1,000 live births) – figures comparable to those of developed countries.

- 3.10 Since the end of the civil conflict in 2009, there has been improving success in generating economic growth (at 7.5 per cent in 2011). According to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), this growth is due to improving economic fundamentals and the introduction of reforms to the tax system and financial sector.
- 3.11 Approximately 800,000 Sri Lankans work abroad—90 per cent in the Middle East—and send about \$4 billion in remittances to Sri Lanka each year. This is second only to the textile industry, which is the major source of foreign exchange earnings.
- 3.12 Following the 2004 tsunami, economic activity, particularly in the fishing, hotels and restaurants, banking, small industry, domestic trade and transport sectors were severely affected. The Sri Lankan Government's Reconstruction Strategy has estimated the total recovery cost to be US\$2.2 billion.
- 3.13 Australia has continued to assist Sri Lanka with economic and social development since the cessation of the civil conflict. In 2011-12, the Australian Government provided \$43.5 million in development assistance to Sri Lanka for demining, reconstruction of schools and houses damaged during the civil conflict, and to help disadvantaged people find work, start a business or restart sustainable farming or fishing activities.

## **Delegation activities**

- 3.14 The delegation met with a range of people to discuss issues relating to bilateral and parliamentary relations, the reconciliation process following the civil conflict, and Australian development assistance to Sri Lanka. Areas for further collaboration between Australia and Sri Lanka such as higher education, trade and development, were also discussed.
- 3.15 The program included visits to several projects funded by AusAID and other international donors in the Northern provinces of Jaffna and Kilonochchi—two provinces particularly affected by the civil war.
- 3.16 Given local media interest in the visit, the delegation issued a media release prior to departing Sri Lanka. The text of the media release is reproduced at **Appendix C**.

## **Bilateral relationship and parliamentary links**

- 3.17 In discussions with the Speaker and members of the Sri Lankan Parliament the delegation aimed to:

- renew links with the Parliament, and assess progress towards establishing a Parliamentary Select Committee on Devolution.



*Delegation meets with Hon Chamal Rajapaksa, accompanied by Her Excellency Kathy Klugman, His Excellency Admiral Thisara Samarasinghe, and Mr W B D Dasanayake, 9 December 2011*

Source Nuwan Duminda, *Parliament of Sri Lanka*

### Parliament of Sri Lanka

- 3.18 Similarities between the Sri Lankan and Australian Parliaments, both of which operate under the Westminster system and share membership of the Commonwealth, were discussed. The delegation asked about various aspects of parliamentary procedure in the Parliament of Sri Lanka.
- 3.19 In addition to the Speaker, the Sri Lankan Parliament had a Deputy Speaker who was Chairman of Committees, and a Deputy Chair of Committees. Question Time followed the Westminster model, with oral questions placed on the notice paper, but supplementary questions without notice. The delegation outlined recent changes to Standing Orders of the House of Representatives, such as time limits for questions and answers during Question Time, and the arrangements for Question Time in the Senate.

- 3.20 Members of Parliament could participate in English, Sinhala or Tamil languages, with Hansard recording the language that was spoken. Some MPs were trilingual, and English was widely used (96 per cent).
- 3.21 Sri Lankan parliamentary committees were similar to the United Kingdom's House of Commons, but there were also consultative committees, chaired by Ministers, to which bills were referred.
- 3.22 The delegation noted Opposition proposals for reform, which included: the establishment of oversight committees; the establishment of a Parliamentary Budget Office (based on the proposed model for the Australian Parliament); and enhanced information services for Members of Parliament.
- 3.23 Funding of political parties and electoral reforms—such as proportional representation and establishing single-member constituencies—were also discussed.
- 3.24 The delegation was pleased to report that the Presiding Officers of the Parliament of Australia had extended an invitation for up to six members of the Sri Lankan Parliament to visit Australia.
- 3.25 The delegation noted the work of international and Australian parliamentary organisations such as the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, and Centre for Democratic Institutions at the Australian National University, in the professional development of parliamentarians and parliamentary staff in Sri Lanka.





*Delegation meets with the Sri Lankan-Australia Friendship Group, 9 December 2011*

*Source* Nuwan Duminda, Parliament of Sri Lanka

## **Devolution**

- 3.26 The delegation heard, from a number of sources, about the need for ‘a political solution’ for the north of Sri Lanka following the cessation of the civil conflict. The delegation noted that while 70 per cent of the population of Sri Lanka were Sinhalese Buddhists, the majority of people in the (northern) peninsula were Tamil Hindus, with a small number of Christians and Muslims. The differences in culture, religion and language sometimes led to friction and alleged discrimination.
- 3.27 Devolution of power was widely recognised as an important governance mechanism for ‘power sharing’. The establishment of a Parliamentary Select Committee on Devolution, resettlement of displaced persons, and land allocation were also commonly recommended.
- 3.28 The Government and Tamil National Alliance (TNA) were in dialogue about devolution. The Government proposed a two-tier approach, with provincial councils providing an opportunity for people to manage their affairs locally. The councils had constitutional powers, although there was concurrence of powers between local and central government. They were centrally funded, and could not raise income tax, but could raise other taxes. The TNA favoured devolved government for the North of the country.

- 3.29 At the time of the delegation's visit, talks had covered police and financing arrangements, and the establishment of a Parliamentary Select Committee on Devolution, but had recently stalled.
- 3.30 Agreement on a model for devolution, particularly in the north of Sri Lanka, appears to be key to a sustainable peace.

### Reconciliation process following the civil conflict

- 3.31 In their various meetings with Government Ministers, members of Parliament, NGO and community representatives, the delegation discussed the cessation of the civil war in Sri Lanka and the ongoing reconciliation process.
- 3.32 These meetings aimed to assist the delegation to:
- gain an enhanced understanding of political, economic and social factors associated with reconciliation, following the civil conflict; and
  - consider the humanitarian, infrastructure and security aspects of the rehabilitation, resettlement and reconstruction efforts, particularly in relation to persons displaced by the conflict.

### Accountability and the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission

- 3.33 At the time of the delegation's visit, the LLRC, established in 2010 to investigate the abrogation of the 2002 ceasefire agreement, had yet to report its findings and recommendations.
- 3.34 The *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka*,<sup>2</sup> produced at the request of United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, was officially released on 25 April 2011. A key area of concern in this report was accountability. The Report, for example, concluded,
- ... that the [Sri Lankan] Government's notion of accountability is not in accordance with international standards. Unless the Government genuinely addresses the allegations of violations committed by both sides and places the rights and dignity of the victims of the conflict at the centre of its approach to accountability, its measures will fall dramatically short of international expectations.<sup>3</sup>

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2 Available at [www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri\\_Lanka/POE\\_Report\\_Full.pdf](http://www.un.org/News/dh/infocus/Sri_Lanka/POE_Report_Full.pdf)

3 *Report of the Secretary-General's Panel of Experts on Accountability in Sri Lanka*, 2011, Executive Summary, p. v.

- 3.35 On its release, the Sri Lankan Government was critical of the UN Expert Panel Report, describing it as “fundamentally flawed” and “patently biased”.<sup>4</sup>
- 3.36 The delegation noted that the Government would be tabling the LLRC report, and making a statement on its response to the recommendations, in Parliament before the end of 2011. The whole report was expected to be tabled in English, with summaries and recommendations also tabled in Sinhala and Tamil.<sup>5</sup>
- 3.37 The delegation noted calls from community representatives, Sri Lankan diaspora and the international community for accountability, particularly in relation to the number and fate of missing persons.
- 3.38 Government representatives stressed that accountability was a matter internal to Sri Lanka, and would be achieved to the extent practicable. From the international community, the Sri Lankan Government sought meaningful, productive dialogue, and acknowledgement of progress made since the end of the civil conflict.

#### Rehabilitation, resettlement and reconstruction

- 3.39 In the aftermath of the conflict, the Government was prioritising efforts on rehabilitation, resettlement, and reconstruction.
- 3.40 The delegation was briefed on a rehabilitation program for ex-combatants in detention, many of whom were children. The program gave ex-combatants skills to develop a successful life, and minimised the risk of re-offending. Release was determined according to categories, based on levels of risk. Around 200 ex-combatants remained under investigation, but had not been charged. The delegation also heard concerns about the legal basis for the rehabilitation program, equity of release, and missing persons.
- 3.41 Action had commenced with a humanitarian effort, including resettlement of IDPs, demining, and infrastructure projects. As at December 2011, 11,600 IDPs had been resettled.
- 3.42 Government representatives outlined the reconstruction efforts being undertaken, which included road, rail and irrigation. Much of this work in the North was being supported by the military.

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4 Ministry of External Affairs, “The Government of Sri Lanka states that the report of the UN Secretary General’s Panel of Experts is fundamentally flawed in many respects”, 13 April 2011, [http://www.mea.gov.lk/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=2730&Itemid=75](http://www.mea.gov.lk/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2730&Itemid=75). [accessed 15 August 2012]

5 The report was subsequently tabled on 16 December 2011, and is available at [http://www.priu.gov.lk/news\\_update/Current\\_Affairs/ca201112/FINAL%20LLRC%20REPORT.pdf](http://www.priu.gov.lk/news_update/Current_Affairs/ca201112/FINAL%20LLRC%20REPORT.pdf) [accessed 15 August 2012].

- 3.43 While demilitarization had been expected post-conflict, areas in the Northern provinces were renamed 'high security zones' – in part because of the need to clear land mines. The delegation heard concerns about the continued military presence of security forces in the North, predominantly Tamil areas.
- 3.44 There were some Tamil and Muslim officers, but the armed forces were primarily Sinhalese. Some personnel were learning the Tamil language. While Tamils had been encouraged to join the armed forces, many remained reluctant to do so.
- 3.45 The delegation asked about plans to reduce the size of the armed forces, post-conflict. The Government said that a professional military was essential for any nation. Around 90 per cent of military personnel were from rural areas, and reducing numbers would have socio-economic consequences. However, the armed forces were no longer recruiting, and were reducing numbers through retirement and non-renewal of certain contract positions.



*Delegation meets with Mr Gotabaya Rajapaksa, 9 December 2011*

Source Nuwan Duminda, Parliament of Sri Lanka



## Australian development assistance to Sri Lanka

- 3.46 In 2010–11, AusAID country program aid to Sri Lanka totalled \$34.3 million. Other Australian assistance through AusAID’s regional and global programs and through other government departments brought total Overseas Development Assistance to an estimated \$52.5 million.
- 3.47 Recovery and long-term development of conflict-affected areas remain a major challenge in Sri Lanka. Heavy flooding in early 2011 has compounded problems for the northern and eastern provinces.
- 3.48 Sri Lanka is tracking well against most Millennium Development Goals at the national level.
- 3.49 The country’s main challenge is stimulating and sustaining broad-based growth particularly in lagging regions. While the number of people living in poverty has almost halved in the last 20 years to 15.2 per cent, it is still persistently high in the conflict-affected north and east, and the tea estate population in central Sri Lanka.
- 3.50 AusAID’s long-term development objective in Sri Lanka is to help rebuild post-conflict communities and assist lagging regions throughout the nation, and support Sri Lankan Government policies and programs to promote inclusive growth and improved service delivery at a national and sub-national level.
- 3.51 The delegation was interested in furthering its understanding of Australia’s development assistance to Sri Lanka, and visited the following AusAID funded projects in the North of the country:
- Support to Conflict Affected Population through Housing (jointly funded by AusAID, Swiss Development Cooperation, European Commission, and jointly implemented by UN Habitat);
  - Rebuilding Conflict Affected Schools in Northern Sri Lanka (funded by AusAID and jointly implemented with UNICEF);
  - Humanitarian Demining in Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi Districts (funded by AusAID and jointly implemented with Delvon Assistance for Social Harmony [DASH]); and
  - Australian Community Rehabilitation Program, Support for Development of the Dairy Sector in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu (AusAID’s largest program in Sri Lanka, jointly implemented with the International Organisation for Migration).
- 3.52 The delegation was briefed on the local situation, governance structures in Jaffna and reconstruction works underway in Jaffna by the Government Agent, Security Forces Commander, and Bishop of Jaffna.



*Delegation visits Tharmapuram GTM School, 12 December 2011*

## Demining

- 3.53 Following the civil conflict, the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka were left riddled with land mines. The National Mine Action Centre (NMAC)<sup>6</sup> estimated that by the end of 2011, approximately 126 sq km of land remained to be cleared.
- 3.54 The largest remaining area was in Mannar District (33.8 sq km), followed by Mullaitivu (27.7 sq km), Kilinochchi (23 sq km), Vavuniya (15 sq km) and Jaffna (5 sq km) in the north. Smaller areas are in borderline districts of Polonnaruwa and Anuradhapura, along with some parts of the east.
- 3.55 In October 2009, the Australian Government announced a five-year, \$20 million initiative to accelerate the pace of demining in Sri Lanka. Australia works with Sri Lanka's Humanitarian Demining Unit and several local and international demining agencies.
- 3.56 The initiative provides equipment and demining teams in an effort to boost Sri Lanka's ability to clear mines. Australia has also funded education for people living with the risk of mines which has contributed to comparatively low death and injury rates.

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6 Set up in July 2010, NMAC is the Sri Lankan Government's lead agency in demining work.



- 3.57 Demining was a major project in Jaffna, and significant progress on the ten year program has been made, with 99.36% of the area completed in the first two years. Mine awareness programs were being run for children by the military and NGOs.



*Delegation visits DASH demining project , 12 December 2011*

#### **Land, resettlement and rehousing in Jaffna**

- 3.58 It has taken some time and effort to reallocate land, rebuild adequate housing and resettle internally displaced persons.
- 3.59 At the time of the delegation's visit, it was estimated that 36,442 people (10,170 families) were to be resettled; of these 30,021 people (8,459 families) were accommodated with their extended family, while the remaining 6,421 people (1,711 families) were living in welfare centres. Around 9,000 people were in transit.
- 3.60 Large scale reconstruction projects were underway, funded by the Government, the international donor community and non-government organisations. It was estimated that 37,286 houses had been damaged and that 60,842 additional houses were needed. The Government had allocated funding to development projects in 2011.

- 3.61 Together with the European Commission and the Swiss Development Corporation, Australia co-funds a permanent housing program implemented through UN-HABITAT. Australia has provided A\$3.5 million for the repair or reconstruction of approximately 4,000 houses. Through an 'owner driven approach', grants are provided to people with proven ownership of the land to rebuild their own house.
- 3.62 Most land had now been released by the security forces, with certificates to show that land was cleared of mines, although some land was being retained for demining purposes. A Land Registry Office was being established, so that people could obtain copies of land registration documents. However, the delegation heard concerns about difficulties faced by displaced persons in demonstrating ownership of land.
- 3.63 The delegation noted that projects supported by Caritas—the Catholic agency for international aid and development—were important locally, as well as for involving the Tamil diaspora in reconstruction.

## Higher education

- 3.64 Education plays a significant role in the bilateral relationship, with Australia the leading provider of tertiary education services to Sri Lanka. Three Australian tertiary providers have distance education facilities in Sri Lanka: Monash College, an affiliate of Monash University; the Australian College of Business and Technology, an affiliate of Edith Cowan University; and Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. The University of Southern Queensland provides a distance learning program via the Sri Lanka Institute of Chartered Accountants.
- 3.65 The delegation was pleased to meet with the Minister for Higher Education. Higher education matters were also raised during meetings with members of Parliament. The aim of discussions was to:
- explore the potential for enhanced trade and investment, including higher education, between Australia and Sri Lanka.
- 3.66 Recent changes to the Sri Lankan higher education sector enabled students to study at public universities free of charge. Numbers were not capped, but the intention was to become more market oriented. New legislation also enabled the Government to provide loans for students to study at private universities. The Government was seeking 20 per cent of the annual student enrolment at private universities to be set aside for students from poorer backgrounds on scholarships.
- 3.67 The Government aimed for Sri Lanka to become the most cost-effective higher education hub in Asia. The sector would be opened up to foreign universities, with the aim of attracting foreign students and retaining Sri



- Lankan students. The establishment of Australian university campuses in Sri Lanka was encouraged.
- 3.68 The Government welcomed assistance in training academics, and other capacity building support. Of some 2,000 academics identified for further training, ten per cent had so far been supported to undertake further postgraduate study. The Government was also supporting programs where students could simultaneously study for academic qualifications and professional accreditation, such as accountancy and teaching.
- 3.69 Concern was expressed about the 'brain drain' from Sri Lanka, with many well qualified people preferring to work abroad. Sri Lankans had close relationships with the diaspora, but many were reluctant to return, particularly to the post-conflict North.
- 3.70 Australia was the number one destination for Sri Lankan students studying abroad. To encourage graduates to return to Sri Lanka, the Government was hoping to attract Sri Lankan academics working in Australian universities to establish campuses in Sri Lanka. Qualifications from foreign universities would be recognized, through international agreements. As well as teaching, this would include research institutions, which would undertake collaborative research with Australian universities.
- 3.71 Through its Development Scholarships and Leadership Scholarships, the Australian Government supports young Sri Lankan leaders through postgraduate programmes at world class tertiary institutions. Scholarships are provided to students in 'priority areas' such as primary and secondary education, the environment, the economy, rural development, health and governance. The delegation was honoured to meet scholarship recipients at a reception hosted by the Australian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka.
- 3.72 The delegation was advised that changes to visa requirements for international students studying in Australian universities, impacted favourably on Sri Lankan students.

## Trade and investment

- 3.73 In its discussions with the Minister of Economic Development, the delegation aimed to:
- explore the potential for enhanced trade and investment, including higher education, between Australia and Sri Lanka.
- 3.74 Maintenance of peace and the regional location of Sri Lanka were key enablers for economic development. Priorities included establishing Sri Lanka as a transport hub for the region, both sea and air, with 24 new airlines coming to Sri Lanka, increasing capacity by 4,000 seats per week.

- 3.75 Development of the tourism industry was underway, concentrated on Sri Lanka's natural and heritage resources, with increased targets for visitors each year, which had been exceeded for the past two years.
- 3.76 Food security initiatives aimed to reduce reliance on imports, by supporting local producers, and encouraging families to grow their own produce. Exporters were focused on value adding and brand development, such as marketing cinnamon, which accounted for 98 per cent of the world market, as 'Ceylon'.
- 3.77 Developing skilled and educated workers remained a priority, through improved vocational education and training, as well as encouraging well educated diaspora to return to work in Sri Lanka.



*Delegation meets with Hon Basil Rajapaksa, 9 December 2011*

*Source Nuwan Duminda, Parliament of Sri Lanka*

## Conclusion

- 3.78 The visit gave the delegation a first-hand insight into the current political, economic and social situation in Sri Lanka, and served to strengthen institutional ties between the Australian and Sri Lankan Parliaments.
- 3.79 The delegation commends the international development projects being undertaken in Jaffna and Kilinochchi districts, and supports continued Australian Government development assistance to Sri Lanka.

- 3.80 The delegation appreciated the frank nature of discussions held with ministers, members of Parliament, and representatives of political parties.
- 3.81 Reconciliation is the basis for a durable and sustainable peace, and the delegation supported ongoing engagement between the Sri Lankan Government and the Tamil diaspora in Australia.
- 3.82 The delegation said they looked forward to the tabling of the LLRC report and stressed the need to address alleged violations of international humanitarian and human rights, by both sides to the conflict.

**Maria Vamvakinou MP**

**Delegation Leader**





## Appendix A

### **Delegation program - Malaysia**

#### **Monday 5 December 2011**

Arrive at Kuala Lumpur International Airport

Briefing with Australian High Commissioner, Mr Miles Kupa, and section heads

Dinner hosted by the High Commissioner with ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Dialogue participants

#### **Tuesday 6 December 2011**

Depart Kuala Lumpur Subang Airport

Arrive at Penang International Airport

Call on Chief Minister of Penang, Rt Hon Lim Guan Eng and Federal MP for Bukit Bendera (Penang), Mr Liew Chin Tong

Briefing with Acting Commanding Officer of 324 Combat Support Squadron, Squadron Leader Al Cooper, and tour of Butterworth RAAF Base

Tour of Suffolk House, Georgetown

Depart Penang International Airport

Arrive at Kuala Lumpur Subang Airport

## Wednesday 7 December 2011

Tour of Monash University Sunway Campus

Call on Pro Vice-Chancellor and President (Malaysia), Professor Robin Pollard, Executive Director, Mr Phan Koon Tuck, and senior leadership team

Travel to Parliament House

Meeting with Deputy Speaker of the Malaysian Parliament, The Hon Datuk Dr Wan Junaidi Tuanku Jaafar, and Members of Parliament: Hon Dato' Noraini Ahmad, MP for Parit Sulong; Hon Dato' Sharum Osman, MP for Lipis; and Hon P Kamalanathan, MP for Hulu

Observe proceedings of the House of Representatives

Lunch with Deputy Speaker and Members of Parliament

Travel to Wisma United Nations

Briefing with United Nations Development Programme Representative for Malaysia, Mr Kamal Malhotra, Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr Alan Vernon, and UN Coordination Specialist, Dr Lin Mui Kiang

Dinner with senior journalists from independent media outlets

## Thursday 8 December 2011

Call on Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon Datuk Richard Riot anak Jaem

Depart Kuala Lumpur International Airport



## Appendix B

### **Delegation program - Sri Lanka**

#### **Thursday 8 December 2011**

Arrive at Bandaranaike International Airport, Colombo

Dinner and briefing with Australian High Commissioner, Ms Kathy Klugman, and section heads

#### **Friday 9 December 2011**

Travel to Parliament House

Meeting with Speaker of the Sri Lankan Parliament, Hon Chamal Rajapaksa accompanied by Deputy Secretary General of the Sri Lankan Parliament, Mr W B D Dasanayake

Meeting with Opposition Leader, Hon Ramil Wickramasinghe

View proceedings of the Parliament

Meeting with Leader of the House, Hon Nimal Siripala De Silva

Lunch hosted by the Speaker and Sri Lanka-Australia Parliamentary Friendship Group

Meeting with the Secretary of the Sri Lankan-Australia Friendship Group, Hon Thilanga Sumathipala, and Members of Parliament

Meeting with Secretary of the Ministry of Justice, Mr Suhada Gamalath

Meeting with Minister for Economic Development, Hon Basil Rajapaksa and Deputy Minister of State Resources and Enterprise Development, Mr Sarath Kumara Guneratne

Travel to Ministry of Defence

Meeting with Secretary of the Ministry of Defence and Urban Development, Mr Gotabaya Rajapaksa

Dinner hosted by the Secretary of the Sri Lanka-Australia Friendship Group, Hon Thilanga Sumathipala

## **Saturday 10 December 2011**

*Unduwap Full Moon Poya Day* (Buddhist public holiday)

Travel by train from Colombo to Kandy

Visit Temple of the Tooth

Visit Peradeniya Botanical Gardens

## **Sunday 11 December 2011**

Travel by Air taxi from Kandy to Colombo

Lunch hosted by His Excellency Admiral Thisara Samarasinghe, Sri Lankan High Commissioner to Australia, and family

Meeting with External Affairs Minister, Hon G L Peiris

Dinner hosted by the Australian High Commissioner with Tamil National Alliance representatives

## **Monday 12 December 2011**

Depart Ratmala Airport, Colombo

Arrive Palaly airport, Jaffna

Travel to Pallai

Visit Pallai Central College (Rebuilding Conflict Affected Schools in Northern Sri Lanka project)

Travel to Paranthan

Visit demining project site at Periyankulam (Humanitarian Demining in Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi Districts project)



Visit housing reconstruction projects at Vaddakachchi (Support to Conflict Affected Populations through Housing project)

Travel to Tharmapuram

Visit Tharmapuram GTM School (Rebuilding Conflict Affected Schools in Northern Sri Lanka project)

Travel to Periyaparanthan

Visit dairy project (Support for Development of the Dairy Sector in Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu sub program)

Travel to Jaffna

Dinner with NGO community

## **Tuesday 13 December 2011**

Meeting with Jaffna Government Agent, Mrs Imelda Sukumar

Meeting with Bishop of Jaffna, Rt Rev Thomas Savundaranayagam

Meeting with Security Forces Commander, Jaffna, Major-General Mahinda Hathurusinghe

Depart Palaly airport, Jaffna

Arrive at Katunayake Airport, Colombo

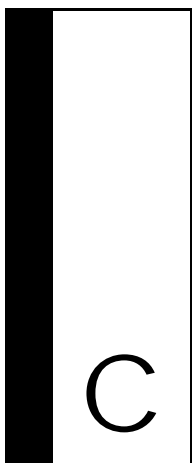
AusAID alumni event hosted by the Australian High Commissioner

## **Wednesday 14 December 2011**

Meeting with Minister of High Education, Hon S B Dissanayake and Secretary for the Department of Higher Education, Dr Sunil Jayantha Nawaratne

Depart Bandaranaike International Airport, Colombo





## Appendix C

### **Text of Press Release issued in Sri Lanka**

#### **Australian Parliamentary Delegation Visits Sri Lanka**

The delegation visited Colombo, Kandy, Jaffna and Kilinochchi district at the invitation of the Sri Lankan Parliament and was particularly interested in discussing the Sri Lankan Government's post-war progress on reconciliation and resettlement.

The five MPs met ministers, fellow parliamentarians, senior bureaucrats, local officials and community representatives.

They appreciated advice from senior politicians that the report from the Lessons Learnt and Reconciliation Commission would be tabled in Parliament shortly. The delegation confirmed Australia's keen interest in seeing action by the Sri Lankan Government, following the LLRC report, to take forward national reconciliation in a way that provides a basis for sustainable peace and progress.

The delegation also visited Australian-funded aid projects to witness first-hand the tangible difference Australian assistance is making to ordinary Sri Lankans as they rebuild their lives after years of civil war.

The delegation comprised parliamentarians from the governing Australian Labor Party and the opposition Liberal Party. It was led by Ms Maria Vamvakinou, Member for Calwell in the state of Victoria.

Other delegation members included: Mr Rowan Ramsey (Member for Grey, Liberal Party); Mr Harry Jenkins (Member for Scullin, Australian Labor Party); Senator Helen Kroger (Senator for Victoria, Liberal Party); and Dr Andrew Southcott (Member for Boothby, Liberal Party).

14 December 2011

