

# CLAWS Newsletter



The Perimeter Watch: Sri Lanka & Maldives | Volume 1 | No 6

by Diksha Jain

## **WEATHER WARNINGS**

### **Sri Lanka**

#### **Severe lightning warning issued for 11 districts**

*([News Wire](#), April 26, 2025)*

On March 27, 2025, the Meteorology Department issued a Red Alert for severe lightning along with thunderstorms for the following regions:

- Uva Province
- Central Province
- North-Central Province
- Hambantota District
- Ampara District
- Batticaloa District
- Vavuniya District

## **EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **Sri Lanka**

#### **Sri Lankan Delegation to Visit U.S. for Talks on Tariffs**

*([Lanka News Web](#), April 18, 2025)*

On April 22, 2025, the Export Development Board (EDB) Chairman and CEO Mangala Wijesinghe announced that a high-level Sri Lankan delegation met with U.S. officials to discuss the recent tariff increases imposed on Sri Lankan exports. The visit followed President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's appointment of a special presidential committee on April 03, 2025, to address the issue. The committee has since submitted a report outlining short-term, medium-term, and long-term strategies to counter the impact of the tariffs.

Although the new tariffs were due to take effect from April 09, U.S. President Donald Trump announced a 90-day pause, excluding a 10% blanket tariff applied to all countries. Sri Lanka, which sends 25% of its exports to the U.S., faces a 44% tariff, among the highest globally. Two talks have already been held with U.S. Embassy trade officials in Colombo. Sri Lanka requests relief considering its IMF-backed recovery programme and upcoming loan repayments due in 2028. If no further reprieve is secured, the tariff regime will take effect in July 2025.

### **India's Mazagon Eyes Colombo Dockyard in Strategic Shift**

*([Lanka Web](#), April 20, 2025)*

India's Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL) entered advanced negotiations to acquire a controlling 51% stake in Colombo Dockyard PLC (CDPLC) from Japan's Onomichi Dockyard Co. Ltd. A binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was expected by the end of April, signalling a potential strategic shift for Colombo Dockyard, Sri Lanka's flagship shipbuilder, which has been grappling with severe financial distress.

Despite posting a Rs 2.48 billion loss in 2024 and accumulating liabilities of over Rs 38 billion, CDPLC remained a key player in ship repairs and harboured ambitions to expand operations in Colombo, Trincomalee, and Hambantota ports. MDL, India's state-owned defence shipbuilder, emerged as the leading contender after other bids fell through, leveraging its strong financial position and existing operational ties with Colombo Dockyard.

### **Chinese Ambassador and Pathfinder founder discuss widening of China-Sri Lanka relations**

*([Daily Mirror](#), April 21, 2025)*

The founder of the Pathfinder Foundation, Milinda Moragoda, met with the Chinese Ambassador to Sri Lanka, Qi Zhenhong, to explore opportunities for further enhancing China–Sri Lanka relations. The discussion covered a wide range of topics, including the global geopolitical climate, Chinese investment in Sri Lanka, and expanding institutional cooperation. Moragoda updated the Ambassador on recent activities of the China-Sri Lanka Cooperation Studies Centre, a key initiative of the Pathfinder Foundation focused on bilateral research and dialogue. He noted that several Chinese delegations are expected to visit the Foundation in the coming weeks, providing a platform for deeper engagement and mutual understanding.

### **President Extends Condolences to Indian Prime Minister Over Kashmir Terror Attack**

*([President's Office](#), April 25, 2025)*

On April 25, 2025, President Anura Kumara Disnayake strongly condemned the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, which killed 26 people, during a phone call with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Expressing shock and sorrow, the President conveyed Sri Lanka's solidarity with India, reaffirmed its zero-tolerance stance on terrorism, and extended condolences to the victims' families while wishing a speedy recovery to the injured. He also expressed hope for a swift return to regional peace and stability.

### **EU GSP+ monitoring mission to arrive in Sri Lanka today**

*([The Morning](#), April 28, 2025)*

On April 28, 2025, the European Union (EU) GSP+ Monitoring Mission arrived in Sri Lanka for a ten-day visit to assess the country's progress on fulfilling conditions tied to the GSP+ trade preferences. The mission, scheduled to remain in Sri Lanka until May 7, planned meetings with government officials, civil society organisations, business groups, and conducted site visits. The review is part of the EU's regular assessment linked to the Generalised Scheme of Preferences Plus (GSP+), under which Sri Lanka benefits from duty-free access to the EU market, exporting goods worth approximately €2.7 billion annually.

### **Sri Lanka to ink MoU with Vietnam to boost diplomatic ties**

*([The Morning](#), April 29, 2025)*

The Sri Lankan Cabinet of Ministers approved a proposal to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Bandaranaike International Diplomatic Training Institute (BIDTI) and the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV). The three-year agreement aims to enhance institutional cooperation in the field of diplomacy by facilitating the exchange of diplomats, scholars, and researchers, as well as promoting joint academic programs, seminars, and training initiatives between the two countries.

### **Sri Lanka president to sign several agreements on visit to Vietnam**

*([Economy Next](#), April 29, 2025)*

Cabinet Spokesman Minister Nalinda Jayatissa announced that President Anura Kumara Disسانayake will visit Vietnam from May 3 to 6, during which several key bilateral trade and cooperation agreements are expected to be signed. The visit will include the signing of the following Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs):

- Between the Sri Lanka Export Development Board (EDB) and VIETRADE
- Between the Ministry of Industry and Entrepreneurship Development and Vietnam's Ministry of Industry and Trade
- Between the Department of Agriculture (DoA) and the Vietnam Academy of Agriculture Sciences
- Between the Bandaranaike International Diplomatic Training Institute (BIDTI) and the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

### **SL-Pakistan relations: Defence Secy. meets Pakistan Defence Min.**

*([The Morning](#), April 30, 2025)*

On April 30, 2025, the fifth annual Sri Lanka–Pakistan Bilateral Defence Dialogue concluded in Islamabad, underscoring the two nations’ ongoing commitment to strengthening defence cooperation and promoting regional stability. The Sri Lankan delegation was led by Defence Secretary Air Vice Marshal (Retd.) Sampath Thuyacontha, while Pakistan’s Secretary Defence, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Muhammad Ali headed the host team.

As part of the visit, Thuyacontha also held a sideline meeting with Pakistan’s Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif on April 29. According to the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence, the dialogue focused on deepening mutual understanding of regional security dynamics and expanding defence collaboration, reflecting the enduring strategic partnership between the two countries.

### **Maldives**

#### **Chinese trade delegation visits Maldives to boost fisheries exports under FTA**

*([MMTV](#), April 19, 2025)*

A delegation from the China Chamber of Commerce of Foodstuffs and Native Produce (CFNA) visited the Maldives from April 13 to 18 to explore opportunities for expanding the export of Maldivian marine products to China under the China–Maldives Free Trade Agreement (FTA), which came into effect on January 01, 2025. The visit aimed to strengthen trade ties and support the growth of the Maldives’ fisheries sector by facilitating easier access to the Chinese market.

During the visit, the delegation met with officials from the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, the Ministry of Fisheries and Ocean Resources, and senior representatives from MIFCO. They also toured major facilities, including the Maandhoo Fisheries Complex, Himmafushi Fish Factory, and Maniyafushi, to assess the quality, production capacity, and export potential of Maldivian fish products such as sea cucumbers and yellowfin tuna.

#### **Maldives Strengthens Economic Ties with Türkiye, Promotes Investment Opportunities in Tourism and Beyond**

*([Maaldif](#), April 19, 2025)*

The Maldives is furthering its international economic ties, as a senior delegation visited Istanbul on April 15, 2025, to strengthen cooperation with Türkiye. Minister of Economic



Development and Trade Mohamed Saeed, along with Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Abdulla Khaleel, engaged with influential Turkish business leaders at a forum organised by the Foreign Economic Relations Board of Türkiye (DEIK) discussing boosting collaboration in essential sectors such as tourism, renewable energy, agriculture, real estate, port development, and technology.

Minister Saeed highlighted the progress made through the Economic Cooperation Agreement (2023) and the Preferential Trade Agreement (2024), reaffirming the Maldives' commitment to a long-term economic partnership with Türkiye. Dr Khaleel emphasised the Maldives' strategic geographic position and strong investment potential.

### **India completes first refit of MNDF's largest vessel 'Huravee'**

*([Maldives Voice](#), April 22, 2025)*

The Maldives National Defence Force (MNDF) Coast Guard vessel Huravee, the largest in its fleet, has departed Mumbai following the completion of a four-month repair and refit at the Indian Naval Dockyard. The ship, gifted by India in 2023, replaced an older vessel of the same name commissioned in 2006.

This was the first refit for the new Huravee and included a full overhaul of machinery, weapons, sensors, and habitability enhancements. The ship also underwent harbour and sea trials, safety audits, and Operational Sea Training before returning to duty. India's Western Naval Command said the successful refit reflects the strong defence ties and strategic partnership between the two countries.

### **President Dr Muizzu sends condolences following the terror attack in Pahalgam**

*([The President's Office](#), April 23, 2025)*

President Dr Mohamed Muizzu extended his condolences to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi following the terror attack in Pahalgam, which claimed innocent lives and left many injured. In an official message, the President expressed deep sorrow over the incident and reaffirmed the Maldives' commitment to combating terrorism in all its forms. Calling the attack a reminder of the urgent need for global unity and cooperation, President Muizzu conveyed heartfelt sympathies on behalf of the Maldivian people, offering condolences to the victims' families and wishing the injured a swift recovery.

### **Maldives and Malaysia commit to strengthen bilateral ties**

*([The President's Office](#), April 28, 2025)*

The Maldives and Malaysia reaffirmed their close bilateral ties and shared values during a Joint Press Conference held today. President Dr Mohamed Muizzu highlighted the two nations' deep-rooted friendship, grounded in mutual respect and Islamic solidarity, and invited Malaysian investors to explore opportunities in economic zones, maritime sectors, and the digital economy.

Both sides also expressed solidarity on global issues, particularly reaffirming support for the Palestinian cause. President Muizzu expressed confidence that his visit would further deepen cooperation and confirmed the Maldives' commitment to standing as a "true friend of Malaysia."

### **Maldives Launches Overseas ID Card and E-Passport Services in Malaysia**

*([Maaldif](#), April 29, 2025)*

The Maldives has officially launched its first overseas service for issuing national identity cards and e-passports at the High Commission in Malaysia, marking a major step in improving services for Maldivians abroad. President Dr Mohamed Muizzu inaugurated the facility on April 28, 2025, during his official visit to Malaysia, where he met with the Maldivian community. The first printed e-passport and ID card were handed over by Minister of Homeland Security and Technology Ali Ihusaan. The move is especially significant for many Maldivians living in Malaysia, who previously had to return home for such services.

The event also included the launch of the Maldivian Students' Association in Malaysia, officially recognised by Minister of Higher Education Dr Ali Haidar. President Muizzu announced an annual contribution of USD 3,000 in Malaysian ringgits to support the association's efforts in fostering community and engagement among students.

## **INTERNAL AFFAIRS**

### **Sri Lanka**

#### **Sri Lanka cancels naval exercise with Pakistan following India's concerns**

*([The Morning](#), April 19, 2025)*

After India expressed its concerns, Sri Lanka has cancelled a planned naval exercise with the Pakistan Navy in the strategic waters off Trincomalee. The exercise, part of the routine defence engagement between Sri Lanka and Pakistan, was reportedly called off following diplomatic communication from New Delhi. The move comes just weeks ahead of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Sri Lanka, and either Colombo or Islamabad has made no official announcements regarding the proposed drill.

The cancellation highlights India's sensitivity to foreign military activity near key maritime zones, particularly amid concerns over the Pakistan Navy's cooperation with China's PLA Navy. India has also been actively investing in Trincomalee's energy infrastructure, and during PM Modi's recent visit, a trilateral agreement with Sri Lanka and the UAE was signed to develop Trincomalee into a regional energy hub.

#### **Port City Colombo Poised to Become South Asia's Fintech Powerhouse**

*([Lanka News Web](#), April 25, 2025)*

Port City Colombo is gearing up to become South Asia's leading fintech hub, backed by a new vision outlined in a report presented by the Fintech Association of Sri Lanka (FASL) during the FinTech World Cup Regional Competition, with global support, including expertise from Professor Douglas Arner of the University of Hong Kong, the initiative centres around creating the Colombo International Financial Centre (CIFIC) Fintech Innovation Hub. Modelled on success stories like Dubai's DIFC and Singapore's fintech ecosystem, the CIFIC plans to offer a streamlined regulatory framework, global partnerships, and startup accelerators to position Colombo as a major player in international financial innovation.

#### **2025 LG Polls: 30 candidates arrested for violating election laws**

*([Adaderana](#), April 28, 2025)*

As of April 28, 2025, Sri Lanka Police have arrested 30 candidates for violating election laws concerning the upcoming Local Government (LG) elections. The arrests were made between March 3 and 6:00 a.m. on April 28, police confirmed. In addition to the candidates, 131 political party supporters were also taken into custody, and 31 vehicles were seized during this period.



Over the same timeframe, police reported receiving 313 complaints related to election law violations and 85 complaints tied to criminal acts.

## **Maldives**

### **Maldives Faces UN Scrutiny Over Supreme Court Suspensions**

*([ETruth](#), April 18, 2025)*

The Maldives faced sharp criticism from the United Nations after three Supreme Court justices were suspended in what's being described as a direct threat to judicial independence. UN Special Rapporteur Margaret Satterthwaite called the move a "blatant attempt" to prevent judicial review of a controversial anti-defection constitutional amendment passed in November 2024. The suspended judges—Dr. Azmiralda Zahir, Husnu Al Suood, and Mahaz Ali Zahir—had previously expressed strong views on the amendment.

She noted reports that the judges' legal counsel was barred from speaking during closed-door hearings, raising further doubts about procedural fairness. The UN expert has formally engaged with Maldivian authorities, seeking explanations. The case has become a flashpoint in growing concerns over democratic backsliding in the Maldives, with the integrity of the nation's highest court now hanging in the balance. Satterthwaite expressed grave concern about the lack of transparency and due process, warning that the pressure of these actions may amount to interference in judicial independence.

### **Government launches 'Tradian' to centralise trade services**

*([MMTV](#), April 20, 2025)*

The Maldives has officially launched 'Tradian', a national single window platform aimed at streamlining import and export services through a unified digital system. The Cabinet approved the initiative on February 02, 2025, agreeing to connect all government agencies involved in trade-related services under a single, integrated system. As part of this rollout, services previously handled by Maldives Ports Limited (MPL)—such as foreign vessel registration, vessel arrival declarations, and sea cargo manifest submissions—will now be processed exclusively through Tradian. The government has announced that by June 1, all import-export services will transition entirely to the Tradian platform, marking a major step forward in improving efficiency, transparency, and accessibility in the Maldives' trade ecosystem.

## About the Author

Diksha Jain is a dedicated scholar in Defence and Strategic Studies, with a strong academic foundation in International Relations. She completed her master's degree in Defence and Strategic Studies, focusing on areas such as maritime security and the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Region. Prior to this, she earned her bachelor's degree in International Relations, where she developed a comprehensive understanding of global politics and regional dynamics.

As a Research Assistant at the Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), Diksha explores critical issues related to defence strategy and maritime security. Her work focuses on the Indian Ocean Region, examining its geopolitical challenges and their implications for regional stability.



All Rights Reserved 2023 Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS)

No part of this publication may be reproduced, copied, archived, retained or transmitted through print, speech or electronic media without prior written approval from C L A W S. The views expressed and suggestions made in the article are solely of the author in his personal capacity and do not have any official endorsement. Attributability of the contents lies purely with author.