

INAUGURAL SPEECH



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Distinguished moderators and speakers,

Australian Defence Advisor,

Our friends from Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan

Officials representing the corporate sector,

Senior Officers,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good Morning to all of you!

Let me at the very outset congratulate the team behind for organizing the second logistics conference in Trincomalee.

This conference has enabled to gather a wider participation to present ideas and discuss important matters pertaining to the field of logistics.

I am hopeful that proceedings of this conference will help to achieve the objectives that are outlined in the concept paper.

The theme that has been selected for this year's conference is a very timely one.

This year's theme, 'Fostering Strategic Partnerships for Maritime Logistics' will for sure help to have effective brainstorming sessions among the subject experts who are here with us today.

If one can recall the theme of the last year's Galle Dialogue - International Maritime Conference, we concentrated on a similar theme, 'Fostering Strategic Maritime Partnerships'.

We focused mainly on how best we can address emerging maritime security threats and challenges by way of forming strategic maritime partnerships.

The last year's Galle Dialogue did not pay attention to the area of maritime logistics, mainly due to the intensity and attention focused on the emerging maritime security threats and challenges that were taking centre stage over the other aspects.

But, I am glad as our logisticians have very rightly identified the significance of partnering strategically to look into the aspect of maritime logistics.

As subject matter experts, you all know the importance of logistics. As our demands continue to increase and become much more complex, the whole process of logistics too gets highly complex.

The components of the logistics cycle are interconnected and form a very challenging environment.

But, generally many tend to look at logistics as a mere process of transporting goods from one end to the other.

As you and I very well know, it is a very complex process that requires careful planning and precise execution of each and every aspect of the logistics cycle.

Ladies and gentlemen,

If we look at our maritime domain, one could very easily see that the security threats and challenges are also becoming complex day by day.

No nation in the world has the ability to face these challenges in isolation.

That is why we see more attention is being focused to establish partnerships as never before.

This is why we see more interactions taking place especially among the navies in the world.

The dynamic and complex nature of our challenges makes us to think, plan and respond as a team.

And this is very much applicable to the field of logistics too.

The heavy logistics demand of the military during critical periods of conflicts has shaped the logistics process to a greater extent.

If you look at the military history of the world, you will be able to find a number of examples to prove the decisiveness of logistics in defining the victory or defeat.

Our experience in nearly three decades of armed conflict is the best example one could cite here.

The LTTE had a war mechanism which was capable of acquiring the much needed military supplies uninterruptedly for a considerable time period.

Their supplies mainly came via sea routes.

The fate of the land battles quite often had a direct impact on the military hardware they received through their international shipping network.

Until the Navy went out to destroy the supply lines of the LTTE, the ground forces had a huge resistance from the LTTE.

But as soon as the LTTE floating warehouses were destroyed, LTTE's military might shattered into pieces.

It is important to remember here that, it took us nearly three decades to end the war.

To do that, we had assistance from our friendly nations in various magnitudes.

It was never an isolated effort but a result of excellent cooperation and coordination among our sister services.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The developments that take place in the field of logistics is unimaginable.

It has the potential to make a very high impact on the way we live on earth and all the way up to the success of our projects in the outer space.

E- Commerce has continued to shape the dealings in the field of logistics as never before.

Starting from the manufactures all the way down to the retailers, everyone is looking at adopting a multi-channel strategy to ensure their objectives are fulfilled.

In simple terms, everyone is looking at establishing great partnerships.

We have also seen mergers and acquisitions taking place in the global logistics field.

The impact of such events on our shores has to be looked in very carefully if we are to yield better results.

Here again, we are looking at forming great partnerships.

Trade and commerce have been a major discussion point in most of the recently held bilateral meetings.

We are expected to see an increase trend in the regional cross-border flow of goods and new investments in our country, in the coming few months.

If we look at the maritime trade very briefly, ships which are carrying containers have grown over the years in size and number.

From a mere 500 TEU, container ships have come a long way in carrying even 20,000 TEUs onboard some of the most advanced Triple E ships (Economy of Scale, Energy Efficient, Environmentally improved).

These ships have lowered the unit cost of moving goods.

But, only limited number of ports in the world are capable of supporting these ships due to their deep draft.

However, the Colombo South harbor is exceptional in this regard and has the capacity to berth some of the world's largest Triple E - ships.

Our harbor has emerged as one of the main transshipment hubs in the region in the recent past and will continue to attract transshipment business.

When you look at all the above trends, it is quite clear that no nation can survive in isolation.

As nations are connected by energy and trade arteries that span across the oceans around the world, we all depend on each other no matter how big or small we are.

If we are to progress as a strong maritime nation, we need to look at forming strategic maritime partnerships with our regional as well as global partners.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It can be security, trade, diplomacy, or any other aspect, I would say, partnerships matter more than anything in the present context.

If partnerships are to prosper, we have to have confidence in our partners.

Confidence building among partners can ensure stability by way of eliminating misunderstanding and mistrust.

We need to work towards establishing stronger connections to foster seamless maritime partnerships with others.

This very much applies to the maritime logistics too.

Obviously, there are many areas we need to seriously look into if we are looking at progressing into the future as one of the leading maritime nations in the region.

As I mentioned earlier, trust and confidence one can place on our country, are the most important aspects that could help forming very strong partnerships with others.

The purpose of conferences of this nature should be primarily to identify how best we can make Sri Lanka a strong maritime nation that has the potential to reap benefits by way of establishing stronger maritime partnerships in the field of logistics.

As we have some of the highly qualified professionals in the logistics field here with us today, I request all of you to pay attention to look at the tactical, strategic as well as policy levels to see how best we can form a workable framework which enable us to partner with regional and global players to yield benefits from the evolving field of maritime logistics.

I am quite confident that this august gathering is more than capable of finding some innovative ways to address the challenges in the field of maritime logistics and to fathom out an effective plan to see how best Sri Lanka can regain our age old maritime heritage in order to become a vital maritime logistics node in the Indian Ocean Region.

I am sure, that this forum will address a number of issues in the maritime logistics sphere in a very broad way during the deliberations to achieve conference objectives.

I could not find a better saying to end up my remarks than what Napoleon Bonaparte once said, and I quote:

“The amateurs discuss tactics: the professionals discuss logistics”.

I sincerely hope that the professional discussions that take place at this year’s conference will be of great value and significance and that the outcome of the conference will help our nation to perform as a leading maritime hub in the region.

ON THAT NOTE, I DECLARE THE CONFERENCE OPEN.

Thank You!

