

The Daily News Line by Faraz



The Importance of Mahinda Rajapaksa

The visit to the sleepy fishing hamlet of Tangalle along Sri Lanka's southern coast, by the Indian High Commissioner underscored the influence the former President of Sri Lanka Mahinda Rajapaksa still maintains.

The changed political landscape in Sri Lanka did not change the relationship Mahinda Rajapaksa has had with India.

The visit of Indian High Commissioner Santosh Jha to former President Mahinda Rajapaksa's home in Tangalle holds significant diplomatic and political implications.



Strengthening Bilateral Cooperation: The meeting focused on enhancing India-Sri Lanka relations, discussing recent political developments, and exploring ways to bolster cooperation between the two nations.

Political Significance: The visit comes after Rajapaksa's shift to his private residence in Tangalle, following the government's repeal of lifetime housing benefits for former presidents. This move is seen by some as a gesture of political retaliation by the current government.

Friendly Relations: Rajapaksa expressed appreciation for the long-standing ties between Sri Lanka and India, highlighting historical, economic, religious, and security connections that go beyond political links.



Pre-Election Diplomacy: Given the context of previous visits, such as in August 2024 ahead of the presidential election, this meeting might be seen as an effort to maintain diplomatic engagement and stability in the region.

India's Strategic Interest: India's engagement with key Sri Lankan political figures like Rajapaksa and Ranil Wickremesinghe underscores its strategic interests in the island nation, particularly in the context of regional politics and economic partnerships.

Overall, the visit signifies India's commitment to maintaining strong diplomatic relations with Sri Lanka, regardless of the political landscape.

AKD SAYS SRI LANKA KNOWS THE FUTILITY OF WAR

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake says his country knows well the futility of war. Speaking at the United Nations General Assembly, he called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.



President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, addressing the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, urged world leaders to commit themselves wholeheartedly to building a safe world for future generations.

The President stressed that nations must walk hand in hand, not apart.

Speaking at the UN Headquarters in New York on the 25th morning Sri Lanka time, the President expressed deep concern over the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip.

He called for an immediate ceasefire, the unhindered delivery of humanitarian aid and the release of hostages by all parties, in line with agreements reached by the United Nations and other stakeholders.

He further emphasized that strong international pressure must be applied to halt the continuing violence and killings.

Furthermore, President Dissanayake emphasized in his address the issue of poverty, which has led to numerous global challenges.

He asserted that both inequality and poverty ought to be regarded as a worldwide catastrophe that requires urgent attention.



The President emphasized the constructive measures implemented by Sri Lanka to address the global drug issue, a multifaceted challenge impacting millions worldwide.

He urged world leaders to collaborate in advancing the global initiative aimed at eradicating the drug menace, which endangers global health, democracy, politics and the overall well-being of society. He proposed stricter enforcement of laws against traffickers, limiting their ability to migrate across borders and establishing more rehabilitation centers for drug addicts.

Turning to corruption, President Dissanayake described it as a destructive force that undermines development, democracy and social well-being while perpetuating poverty.

He noted that Sri Lanka has already embarked on this difficult but essential fight for the sake of future generations and urged all countries to embed the culture of anti-corruption within their governance.

Concluding, the President said that the Sri Lankan people, who have chosen the path of light over darkness, are united around the vision of "A Thriving Nation – A Beautiful Life."

He explained that this historic goal is being advanced step by step through corruption-free and ethical governance, poverty eradication, digitalization and environmental sustainability, with equal emphasis on strengthening education and healthcare.

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Former French president Sarkozy given five-year sentence after Libya case

Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy has been sentenced to five years in jail after being found guilty of criminal conspiracy in a case related to millions of euros of illicit funds from the late Libyan leader Col Muammar Gaddafi.

The Paris criminal court acquitted him of all other charges, including passive corruption and illegal campaign financing.

The ruling means he will spend time in jail even if he launches an appeal, which Sarkozy says he intends to do.

Speaking after Thursday's hearing, the 70-year-old, who was president from 2007-12, said the verdict was "extremely serious for rule of law".



Sarkozy, who claims the case is politically motivated, was accused of using the funds from Gaddafi to finance his 2007 election campaign.

In exchange, the prosecution alleged Sarkozy promised to help Gaddafi combat his reputation as a pariah with Western countries.

Judge Nathalie Gavarino said Sarkozy had allowed close aides to contact Libyan officials with a view to obtaining financial support for his campaign.

But the court ruled that there was not enough evidence to find Sarkozy was the beneficiary of the illegal campaign financing.

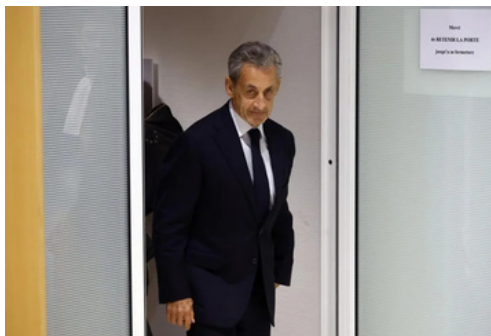
He was also ordered to pay a fine of €100,000 (\$117,000, £87,000).

There was a shocked intake of breath in court when the judge read out her sentence.

Sarkozy could be sent to prison in Paris in the coming days –

a first for a former French president and a humiliating blow for a man who has always protested his innocence in this trial and the other legal cases against him.

"What happened today... is of extreme gravity in regard to the rule of law, and for the trust one can have in the justice system," Sarkozy said outside the court building.



"If they absolutely want me to sleep in jail, I will sleep in jail, but with my head held high," he said.

The investigation was opened in 2013, two years after Saif al-Islam, son of the then-Libyan leader, first accused Sarkozy of taking millions of his father's money for campaign funding.

The following year, Lebanese businessman Ziad Takieddine - who for a long time acted as a middleman between France and the Middle East - said he had written proof that Sarkozy's campaign bid was "abundantly" financed by Tripoli, and that the €50m (£43m) worth of payments continued after he became president.

Among the others accused in the trial were former interior ministers, Claude Gueant and Brice Hortefeux. The court found Gueant guilty of corruption, among other charges, and Hortefeux was found guilty of criminal conspiracy.

Sarkozy's wife, Italian-born former supermodel and singer Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, was **charged last year with hiding evidence linked to the Gaddafi case** and associating with wrongdoers to commit fraud, both of which she denies.

Since losing his re-election bid in 2012, Sarkozy has been targeted by several criminal investigations.

He also appealed against a February 2024 ruling which found him **guilty of overspending on his 2012 re-election campaign**, then hiring a PR firm to cover it up. He was handed a one-year sentence, of which six months were suspended.

In 2021, he was found guilty of trying to bribe a judge in 2014 and became the first former French president to get a custodial sentence.

In December, the Paris appeals court ruled that he could serve his time at home wearing a tag instead of going to jail

Shorts

President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, addressing the 80th session of the United Nations General Assembly, touched on poverty, fighting corruption, drugs, and digital democracy. He also called for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.- Hirunews.lk

Heavy rainfall of about 100mm is likely at some places across the Western, Sabaragamuwa and North-western provinces, and in Galle, Matara, Kandy and Nuwara-Eliya districts: Department of Meteorology.- Hirunews.lk

UPDATE: The death toll in the Thalawa collision has risen to 4. The deceased are all persons who were travelling in the van: Police.- Hirunews.lk

The Opposition has decided to bring a No-Confidence motion against Speaker, Dr. Jagath Wickramaratne: SJB MP Ajith P. Perera says in Parliament.- Hirunews.lk



The Attorney General was ordered to look into possible litigation against the foreign company of the X-Press Pearl vessel for failing to pay the compensation ordered in the Fundamental Rights lawsuits filed regarding the fire on the ship, and to report the findings to the court on January 26, 2026, by the Supreme Court: Reporter.- Hirunews.lk

The All Share Price Index (ASPI) of the Colombo Stock Exchange (CSE) posted an all-time closing high of 21,521.06 after gaining by 182.61 points (0.86%) today (25). The turnover was Rs. 9.2 billion: CSE.- Hirunews.lk