



**THE HON. MALCOLM TURNBULL MP
PRIME MINISTER**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull visits Sri Lanka

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has held productive discussions with the President and Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, during a visit to Colombo.

The visit marked the 70th anniversary of bilateral relations and highlighted the strong friendship between the two countries.

The leaders identified new areas of collaboration including in trade and investment, defence and security matters. Prime Minister Turnbull expressed appreciation for Sri Lanka's strong cooperation in countering people smuggling.

In discussions with President Sirisena, Prime Minister Turnbull announced three Australian Stabcraft vessels will be given to the Sri Lankan Coast Guard to boost maritime security, as well as assistance from the Australian Federal Police to reinforce Sri Lanka's counter-narcotics efforts. This builds on the strong existing cooperation between Australia and Sri Lanka in addressing transnational crime, and people smuggling.

Prime Minister Turnbull also offered Australia's support to establish Sri Lanka's proposed National Defence College, with a senior Australian military officer to be seconded to the College for two years from 2018.

The leaders discussed shared strategic interests and agreed that Australia and Sri Lanka, as Indian Ocean trading nations, had a strong common interest in working together to preserve the rules-based order that has underpinned the region's peace and prosperity.

During the visit, Prime Minister Turnbull and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe witnessed the signing of a bilateral Trade and Investment Framework Arrangement, which will establish regular senior officials' talks to facilitate trade and investment. The Framework follows on from the Joint Declaration on Enhanced Cooperation signed during President Sirisena's visit to Australia.

With two-way trade approaching A\$1billion, strong recent growth in education links and tourism, opportunities in energy and resources and agribusiness, and the resumption

this week of direct flights between Sri Lanka and Australia, Leaders agreed that the economic relationship was poised to take off.

The Prime Ministers discussed the planned establishment of Sri Lanka's Parliamentary Budget Office, and Prime Minister Turnbull extended an offer of capacity-building and training assistance once the Office was in operation. This was in keeping with Australia's wider support through the World Bank for Sri Lanka's reform efforts in innovation, trade facilitation and ease of doing business.

Prime Minister Turnbull's visit completed the celebrations for the 70th anniversary of bilateral relations between Australia and Sri Lanka this year, and laid the foundation for even closer ties in the years to come.