

'SRI LANKA HAS PRIORITISED TIES WITH CHINA'

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

Gotabaya Rajapaksa, left, with Wei Fenghe.

Sri Lanka has prioritised developing relations with China and “firmly supports” China’s position on issues concerning its core interests, President Gotabaya Rajapaksa told Chinese State Councilor and Minister of National Defence Wei Fenghe, according to Chinese state media.

The Sri Lankan President said his country “has been pursuing an independent foreign policy and will never bend to pressure from major powers outside the region as well as never forge an alliance with any country”, *Xinhua* news agency reported on Wednesday.

Sri Lanka and China vowed to enhance pragmatic cooperation in all sectors, “including the military”. While specifics of the enhanced military ties are yet to emerge, senior Sri Lankan Defence officials and the visiting Chinese delegation signed a “Military Assistance Protocol”, Sri Lanka’s Ministry of Defence said in a statement issued after the top Chinese official’s departure on Thursday morning.

Thanking China for providing “long-term and precious” support to Sri Lanka, President Rajapaksa said he hoped to learn from the Communist Party of China’s governance experience on poverty alleviation and rural revitalisation, *Xinhua* said in its report.

General Wei, in his talks with the Sri Lankan leadership, seems to have reiterated his message in Dhaka on Tuesday slamming “powers from outside the region” for forging military alliances in South Asia. Chinese state media quoted General Wei as telling the Sri Lankan leadership, “Certain major countries are keen to form cliques and factions and seek regional hegemony, which goes against people’s shared aspirations and severely harms the interests of the regional countries. China appreciates Sri Lanka’s independent and non-aligned policy and will make joint efforts with Sri Lanka to strengthen coordination and safeguard regional peace and tranquillity.”

His apparent attack on the India-U.S.-Australia-Japan Quad grouping echoed reservations voiced by Sri Lanka earlier. In October last year, Sri Lanka’s Foreign Secretary Admiral Jayanath Colombage had said, “We are observing the rise of Quad as an exclusive military alliance ... If Quad is aiming at economic revival, there are no issues.”

END

Downloaded from crackIAS.com

© **Zuccess App** by crackIAS.com