



## Australia to Gift Beechcraft KA350 King Air Aircraft to Sri Lanka

The Australian Government has announced that it will gift a former Royal Australian Air Force Beechcraft KA350 King Air aircraft (registration A32-673) to the Sri Lankan Government. The aircraft will be used to enhance Sri Lanka's sovereign aerial maritime surveillance capability.

This was conveyed to President Ranil Wickremesinghe when an Australian delegation led by the Australian High Commissioner HE Paul Stephens met the President at the Presidential Secretariat today (12).

The gift of the aircraft is part of the Australian Government's commitment to strengthening and enhancing the cooperation and collaboration that is the foundation of the strong bilateral relationship between Australia and Sri Lanka. A key focus of this relationship remains the continued cooperation on countering all forms of transnational crime, including drug smuggling, as well as strengthening border management through intelligence sharing and the deterrence, disruption, interception and return of maritime people smuggling ventures under the border security operation known as Operation Sovereign Borders.

The Australian Government greatly values this cooperation, which has led to the disruption of a significant number of maritime people smuggling ventures, and has protected the lives and livelihoods of vulnerable people by preventing criminal exploitation, dangerous sea voyages and loss of life at sea.

Following the Australian Minister for Home Affairs' visit to Sri Lanka in June last year, the Department of Home Affairs has driven forward a number of new initiatives in these areas, in partnership with a number of Sri Lankan Government departments. In pursuing these initiatives, Australia has emphasised the importance of supporting Sri Lanka to develop sovereign capabilities.

As part of the gift of the aircraft, the Australian Government will also provide sustainment support for a period of 12 months, after which sustainment will become the sole responsibility of the Sri Lanka Government.

The Australian Government is confident that this gift will further strengthen the strong bilateral relationship between Australia and Sri Lanka, and will help to enhance Sri Lanka's ability to counter transnational crime and protect its borders.

Deputy High Commissioner Ms Lalita Kapur, First Secretary Mr Brett Zehnder and Defence Advisor Captain Ian Cain were also present at this meeting.

**President's Media Division (PMD)**

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