

## **Indian-American Atul Keshap sworn in as US Envoy to Sri Lanka**

13/08/2015 14:03 by admin

**Washington:** Indian-American Atul Keshap has been sworn in as the US Ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives, becoming the second Indian-origin diplomat to be posted to the region after Richard Rahul Verma.

Keshap, 44, a former official at the US Embassy in India, was administered the oath of office by Deputy US Secretary of State for Management and Resources Heather Anne Higginbottom.

"American people want to partner with the people of Sri Lanka as they forge a diverse, prosperous, unified, reconciled and democratic nation," Keshap said yesterday. "In Maldives, we want to be partners with the people and government in expanding rule of law and human rights, and combating violent extremism and the effects of climate change," he said.

Keshap was confirmed by the US Senate as the country's envoy last week. It would be his first Ambassadorial posting.

In his previous capacity as the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in South and Central Asian Affairs, Keshap had visited Sri Lanka and Maldives on several occasions.Â

"For me to serve as the Ambassador of the United States of America to Sri Lanka and Maldives gives me great personal joy and a renewed and tremendous sense of dedication and solemn commitment to the values that make our country a beacon of Liberty, a lamp lit beside the golden door. I very much look forward to working with the people of these beautiful and wondrous lands," he said.

"He is an individual of a deep strategic insight, a fearless tenacity and unrelenting royalty," Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asia Nisha Desai Biswal said.

"Atul believes in transformational power of engaging directly with a wide range of actors from government officials to civil society, even to Bollywood actor," Higginbottom said.Â

The top American diplomat praised the role played by Keshap in creating consensus on India US civil nuclear deal while being posted at the US Embassy in New Delhi.Â

Keshap and Verma, the US envoy to India, both trace their origin to Punjab.

His father, Keshap Chander Sen, who was from Punjab, was a UN development economist working in Nigeria where Keshap was born in June, 1971.

His mother, Zoe Calvert, had been in the US Foreign Service when she met and married Sen in London. She had also served at the US embassy in India.

"If I have achieved anything in life, it is because of the wisdom my parents imparted and the sacrifices they undertook.Â I am forever in their debt," he said.

Sri Lankan Ambassador to the US Prasad Kariyawasam and Maldives Deputy UN Permanent Representative Jeff Waheed were present at the swearing in ceremony, attended by a number of Indian-Americans.

- PTI