

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1622

ANSWERED ON:13.03.2002

VISIT OF SRI LANKAN PRIME MINISTER

BODAKUNTI VENKATESHWARLU; GANGASANDRA SIDDAPPA BASAVARAJ; IQBAL AHMED SARADGI; SATYAVRAT CHATURVEDI; SRIKANTA DATTA NARASIMHARAJA WADIYAR; SUNDER LAL TIWARI; VILAS BABURAO MUTTEMWAR

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government have stepped up humanitarian assistance to Sri Lanka;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka visited India in December, 2001 and held discussions with the Prime Minister;
- (d) if so, the outcome of discussions held;
- (e) whether India has agreed to provide all help and assistance including wheat to Sri Lanka;
- (f) if so, the details thereof; and
- (g) the extent to which Sri Lanka has accepted India's offer of help for resolving the ethnic problem?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH)

(a) to (g) The Sri Lankan Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe visited India from December 22-24, 2001. Wide-ranging discussions were held in a cordial atmosphere reflecting the close relations between the two countries. Substantive discussions were held with Prime Minister and External Affairs Minister.

India's commitment to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka was reiterated and our consistent support to the peace process and to cooperating fully towards Sri Lanka's economic development and progress reaffirmed.

Given the close relations between the two countries and following a request from the Government of Sri Lanka, India will provide 300,000 tons of wheat to Sri Lanka on terms agreed to by both sides. A delegation from Sri Lanka visited India and held substantive discussions with officials in the Ministry of Finance on February 27, 2002.

The two sides also agreed to cooperate in a number of other areas with immediate priority for agriculture, power and information technology.

Both sides also agreed to work on commissioning a feasibility study on a land bridge between the two countries, keeping in mind the age old historical, cultural and social ties between the two nations.