

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:302
ANSWERED ON:03.12.2003
VISIT OF PM TO SYRIA
PRIYA RANJAN DASMUNSI

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether our PM visited Syria recently;
- (b) if so, the details of the discussions held between the two countries;
- (c) whether the recent crisis in west Asia came up for discussion; and
- (d) if so, the response of the Syrian Government in the said matter?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI VINOD KHANNA)

a) Yes

b), c) & d) A statement is placed on the table of the House.

Statement referred to in parts (b), (c) & (d) of Lok Sabha Unstarred Question No. 302 to be answered on 3.12.2003

Both sides had comprehensive exchange of views on a wide range of important bilateral, regional and international issues, in a way that reflects the deep historical relations between India and Syria. They expressed their satisfaction at the steady and comprehensive growth in bilateral relations. They, however, emphasized that enormous potential for further bilateral cooperation needed to be tapped for mutual benefit. They committed themselves to further strengthening and expanding their bilateral cooperation, especially in political, economic, commercial, cultural and science & technology sectors.

The two sides identified fields such as Biotechnology, Information Technology, hydrocarbons, Railways, Education and Agriculture where existing complementarities could be exploited for mutual benefit. They agreed to encourage the private and public sectors to expand the scope of mutual trade and investments.

The two delegations held an in-depth exchange of views on the emerging international and regional security environment. Both sides condemned all acts of terrorism, of which they have been victims. Both delegations agreed that terrorism should not be linked to any religion and no attempt be made to tarnish any religion in the name of terrorism. India and Syria called for the establishment of a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the Middle East.

Syria welcomed the initiative taken by the Prime Minister of India aimed at fostering friendship and good-neighbourly relations between India and Pakistan. Syria supported resolution of India-Pakistan issues bilaterally through dialogue based on the Simla Agreement of 1972 and the Lahore Declaration of 1999. Both sides supported strong cooperation for combating international terrorism according to the international law and the stand of the Non Aligned Movement taken in this regard.