

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:4182

ANSWERED ON:25.08.2004

VISIT BY P.M.s OF SRI LANKA AND SINGAPORE

Chouhan Shri Shivraj Singh; Das Gupta Shri Gurudas; Mandlik Shri Sadashivrao Dadoba; Rai Shri Nakul Das; Singh Shri Kirti Vardhan; Verma Shri Ravi Prakash; Vijay Krishna Shri ; Yadav Shri Anirudh Prasad (Sadhu)

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Prime Ministers of Sri Lanka and Singapore as well as the External Affairs Minister of Germany visited India recently;
- (b) if so, the details of the discussion held and the outcome thereof;
- (c) whether any bilateral agreements have been signed with these countries;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the steps taken/ proposed to be taken by the Government to strengthen bilateral ties with these countries?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI RAO INDERJIT SINGH)

(a) Yes, Sir.

(i) Prime Minister of Singapore visited India from 8-11 July 2004.

(ii) Prime Minister of Sri Lanka visited India from 17-19th July, 2004.

(iii) Foreign Minister of Germany visited India on 14th July 2004.

(b) (i) The Prime Minister of Singapore called on the President and Vice-President. He also had a restricted meeting as well as delegation level talks with the Prime Minister, President of Congress Party and Chairman of the United Progressive Alliance Coordination Committee; Minister of External Affairs; Minister of Commerce and Industry; and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha called on the dignitary. He also had a meeting with Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, former Prime Minister. Both sides expressed satisfaction at the strengthening and diversification of the bilateral relations and resolved to take them to even greater heights. They also discussed the ways to increase cooperation at regional and multilateral level on issues of mutual interest.

(ii) India and Sri Lanka discussed all issues of mutual interest including ways to further strengthen relations between the two countries in various sectors. Prime Minister announced the offer of a line of credit of US\$ 150 million to Sri Lanka in the petroleum sector and also conveyed in principle agreement for extending another line of credit of US\$ 100 million for projects in the rural sector. Discussions were held to review and strengthen cooperation in areas such as culture, power, dairy production, railways, roads and highways, defence and supply of wheat flour. The Sri Lankan Prime Minister briefed the Indian side on developments relating to the peace process in Sri Lanka. The Indian side reiterated its principled position on the resolution of the ethnic problem and expressed hope for the early resumption of peace talks between the parties involved.

(iii) German Foreign Minister called on Prime Minister and met with External Affairs Minister. Discussions with External Affairs Minister focussed on review of bilateral relations including the visit of Chancellor Schroeder to India on 7th October 2004 and on exchange of views on regional and international developments. Both sides shared the view on the need for reform of the UN Security Council so as to reflect the 21st Century realities and agreed to support each other's candidature in an expanded UNSC.

(c & d) No bilateral agreements were signed with these countries during the visits.

(e) (i) In pursuance of our 'Look East Policy', we will continue to pay special attention to Singapore, which is one of the ASEAN

countries, keeping in mind our national interests. Both countries are negotiating Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) for further cementing growing economic and commercial ties. Our effort would be to further intensify the cooperation in all the fields of mutual interest.

(ii) India attaches high importance to its relations with Sri Lanka. The increasing number of high level exchanges reflect the mutual understanding and spirit of cooperation between the two sides. Government of India is committed to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka and supports a peaceful resolution of the ethnic conflict through a negotiated settlement satisfying the aspirations of all sections of Sri Lankan society. Government has taken steps leading to increased cooperation in the areas of trade and commerce, tourism, agriculture, culture, technology and small-scale industries, among others. The Indo Sri Lanka Free Trade Agreement is working well and has contributed to substantial growth in bilateral trade. A comprehensive economic partnership agreement is under discussion between the two sides. Private Indian air carriers are operating flights to Sri Lanka contributing to enhanced people to people contacts. India's technical and financial assistance to Sri Lanka in various fields is growing and has contributed to significant expansion of ties in areas such as railways, oil and natural gas, supply of food grains, disaster management, health and human resources development.

(iii) Efforts would continue to be made to strengthen and deepen bilateral relationships with Germany for mutual benefit.