

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:547

ANSWERED ON:26.07.2000

VISIT OF FOREIGN MINISTER TO SRI LANKA

MADHAVRAO SCINDIA;RAMDAS ATHAWALE;RENUKA CHOWDHURY;VSM (RETD.) COL. CHOUDHARY

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether a high level delegation headed by him visited Sri Lanka in June, 2000;

(b) if so, the details of the officers who were members of the delegation;

(c) the issues on which discussions were held with the Sri Lankan Government;

(d) the outcome thereof;

(e) whether India offered a credit facility to Sri Lanka;

(f) if so, the details thereof;

(g) whether a special envoy of Sri Lankan President visited New Delhi recently; and

(h) if so, the details thereof including the message brought by him?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI AJIT KUMAR PANJA)

(a) to (f) The Minister of External Affairs visited Sri Lanka from June 11-12, 2000 and held discussions with the Sri Lankan President, Foreign Minister, Leader of the Opposition and several other political leaders. The Minister was accompanied by the Joint Secretary (BSM) in the Ministry of External Affairs.

The discussions during the visit took place in the context of strengthening the close and friendly relations between India and Sri Lanka. With regard to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, the talks focussed on measures to achieve a lasting peace through a political settlement within the framework of the unity, sovereignty and integrity of Sri Lanka in a manner which would meet the aspirations of all communities.

During the visit, India offered to extend Sri Lanka a credit line of US\$ 100 million. The possibilities of Sri Lanka's purchasing wheat, rice and sugar on a counter trade basis from India, were also discussed. The text of the Joint Statement issued at the end of the visit is appended.

(g) & (h) A Special Envoy of the Sri Lanka President, Mr. Lakshman Jayakody, Minister for Buddha Sasana, Culture & Religious Affairs, visited Delhi from July 4-6, 2000. He handed over a letter from President Kumaratunga to the Prime Minister, expressing appreciation of India's diplomatic and moral support in Sri Lanka's recent time of crisis. The Special Envoy also called on the Minister of External Affairs and the Minister of Tourism & Culture.

SRI LANKA - INDIA JOINT STATEMENT (June 12, 2000)

The Minister of External Affairs of India, Shri Jaswant Singh made an official visit to Sri Lanka, at the invitation of the Government of Sri Lanka, from 11th to 12th June. During his visit the Minister had discussions with President Kumaratunga and Foreign Minister, Lakshman Kadirgamar. He also met Mr. Ranil Wickremesinghe, the Leader of the Opposition and representatives from other political parties.

At the commencement of discussions, the visiting Minister reiterated the continued commitment of the Government of India to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka. He also expressed the good wishes and support of the Government of India to the restoration of a lasting peace, which would be possible through a political process that produces a settlement, which meets the aspirations of all communities.

The discussions touched upon the present situation and also the broader issues related to the further strengthening of the existing close and friendly relations that India and Sri Lanka have traditionally enjoyed.

President Kumaratunga apprised the visiting Minister of current political developments including the consultations between the Government and other political parties and the facilitation efforts of Norway.

President Kumaratunga welcomed India's offer to be of assistance in the humanitarian as well as economic sphere to ease any constraints that may be currently faced by Sri Lanka. Shri Jaswant Singh added in this regard that India would be prepared to extend to Sri Lanka a credit facility, on terms to be mutually worked out between the two Finance Ministers, amounting to US\$ 100 million. The possibilities of Sri Lanka's purchasing wheat, rice and sugar on a counter trade basis from India, were also discussed.

In conclusion both sides noted that the discussions had been productive and that they had enabled the reaching of understandings on

the measures that India and Sri Lanka can take both collectively as well as individually, to bring about lasting peace in Sri Lanka. Shri Jaswant Singh emphasised that he was leaving Sri Lanka at the end of his visit confident of the depth, strength and direction of India - Sri Lanka relations and their ability to meet the common challenges both countries face.