

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:378

ANSWERED ON:26.07.2006

INDIA -SRI LANKA TIES

Pallani Shamy Shri K.C .;Singh Shri Dushyant

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether any talks were held recently between India and Sri Lanka on various bilateral issues;
- (b) if so, the details and the outcome thereof;
- (c) whether the matter regarding protecting the lives of Tamil minority people in Sri Lanka also came up for discussion;
- (d) if so, the reaction of Sri Lankan Government thereto; and
- (e) the steps taken by the Union Government to improve the ties between the two countries?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI E. AHAMED)

- (a) Yes, Sir. Wide-ranging talks were held with Sri Lanka during the visit of the Foreign Secretary to Colombo from July 3-4, 2006.
- (b) (c) (d) & (e) Both sides reiterated the high priority that they accord to expansion of bilateral cooperation in all spheres. While reaffirming India's commitment to the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Sri Lanka, Government of India has emphasized the need to make all possible efforts to strengthen the ceasefire and to revive the political dialogue in order to move the peace process forward. We have also conveyed that any escalation of violence will not only undermine the ceasefire but also result in civilian casualties. The Sri Lankan Government has conveyed that war is not an option and that it remained committed to a political solution to the ethnic issue.