

Government of Sri Lanka rejects accusation on denial of entry to Swedish Foreign Minister

The attention of the Government of Sri Lanka has been drawn to reported statements alleging that a visa had been denied to the Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt to visit Sri Lanka together with the French Foreign Minister Bernard Kouchner and the British Foreign Secretary David Miliband.

This allegation is baseless, as there was no formal application received for a visa by the Sri Lanka Embassy in Stockholm. At no instance did the Sri Lanka Government deny entry to Minister Bildt. In fact, an invitation had been extended by Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama, to his Swedish counterpart to visit Sri Lanka in early May.

Further it may be noted that when the visits by the Foreign Minister of France and the British Foreign Secretary were discussed with Sri Lanka both at Presidential and Ministerial levels, there was no indication of the participation of the Swedish Foreign Minister. The Government of Sri Lanka envisages the visits of the French and the British Foreign Ministers purely on a bilateral basis and not in terms of their membership in a regional or United Nations context. Further it was found to be rather unwieldy to facilitate three Foreign Ministers at one given time at such short notice. In addition, there is an EU-TROIKA visit scheduled to take place from 12 – 13 May 2009 where Sweden would be represented. It was in these circumstances that Sri Lanka requested that the visit of the Swedish Foreign Minister be undertaken in early May, which was communicated to the Swedish Foreign Ministry.

It is extremely regrettable that the Government of Sri Lanka is being wrongly accused of preventing the visit of the Swedish Foreign Minister by stating that it would be interpreted as a challenge to the dialogue with the EU and consequences will follow bilaterally and multilaterally. It needs to be understood that in this instance there had been no formal prior consultations with the government of Sri Lanka with regard to the visit of the Swedish Foreign Minister. The statements made in this regard seem to be emanating from a unilateral decision made on the part of Sweden and the EU with regard to the said visit.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Colombo
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