

Main Identity

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Back Friend, guide & mentor to CII



Goh Chok Tong, former Prime Minister of Singapore

*Rashmi Bhatnagar
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Singapore, Oct. 10 It was a rather emotional CII chief mentor Tarun Das who recalled the lonely years for Indian business and industry in the early 1990s, while addressing on Friday a session of the second mini-Pravasi Bharatiya Divas session in Singapore that was presided over by former Singapore Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

Growth story

While one of the speakers pointed out that Goh had believed in the India growth story in the early 1990s and at a time when several people in India had doubts about its economic potential, Das said he vividly remembered the day in September 1993 when he had come with a CII delegation of 18 Indian CEOs to Singapore meet Prime Minister Goh.

Gracious host

"We were granted a 30-minute interview at 10 a.m.; he spoke to us for one-and-a-half hours.

"At 11.28 a.m. he asked us what we were doing in the evening."

With most of them not having visited Singapore before and hardly knowing many people there, they replied they had no particular plans.

"So he invited us for dinner, where we met 15 CEOs of Singapore companies."

Added Das, "He held out his hand of friendship when the Indian industry was being seen as the Bombay Club... and running scared of competition".

Building confidence

Ever since then, "He has been a friend, guide and counsellor to us, having met us every single year for the next 14 years. He gave us the confidence that we can compete in the world."

Turning to Goh, he said, "In those days, we did not know Asean or China; you educated us on East Asia, South-East Asia and Asean.

"We've had 15 years of you mentoring."

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