

**LOK SABHA**  
**UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.665**  
TO BE ANSWERED ON 06.02.2019

**MECHANISM TO ENHANCE COOPERATION**

665. SHRI C. MAHENDRAN:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state :

- (a) whether the Government has recently introduced any alliance/mechanism to enhance cooperation in wide-ranging spheres including exploring ways to substantially enhance India's economic involvement in business and development sector of Central Asia;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government is planning in developing viable connectivity options between India and Afghanistan and Central Asia to further facilitate trade and economic activity in the region; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

**ANSWER**

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS  
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) & (b) The First India-Central Asia Dialogue at the level of Foreign Ministers, with the participation of Afghanistan, was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan on 12-13 January 2019. External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj co-chaired the Dialogue along with H.E. Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov, the host and the Foreign Minister of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

During this Dialogue, External Affairs Minister offered to extend India's Development Partnership by taking up concrete projects, inter alia, under Lines of Credit and Buyers' Credit, and by sharing India's expertise. In this connection, India proposed the setting up of the "India-Central Asia Development Group". India also proposed setting up of a direct business-to-business arrangement and organizing a meeting of leading chambers of commerce from all the five Central Asian countries and India in New Delhi in the coming months. India also put forward several proposals towards enhancing cultural cooperation and training programmes for capacity building for candidates from Central Asia.

(c) & (d) Yes. India has been desirous of promoting connectivity options between India, Afghanistan and Central Asia. The joint efforts of India, Iran and Afghanistan have led to the development of the Chabahar Port in Iran as a viable route to connect to Afghanistan and potentially to Central Asia. India's other connectivity initiatives in the region consist of the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) Agreement which was signed by India, Iran and Russia in September 2000 to facilitate movement of goods between these three countries and adjoining countries of the CIS region and Central Asia. India has also been admitted to the 'Ashgabat Agreement' in 2018, which aims at establishment of an International Transport and Transit Corridor between Iran, Oman, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

\*\*\*\*\*