

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.3714
TO BE ANSWERED ON 25.03.2022**

EFFORTS TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA

3714. SHRI S. JAGATHRAKSHAKAN:

Will the minister of External Affairs be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government agrees with the view that it must now redouble its efforts towards Central Asia to counter the 'Great Game' rivalries playing out in the region and reclaim its shared history with countries that are an important market, a source for energy and also a bulwark against the threats of extremism and radicalisation;**
- (b) if so, the steps taken/being taken by the Government in this regard; and**
- (c) if not, the reasons therefor?**

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[SMT. MEENAKASHI LEKHI]**

(a) to (c) The Government has accorded utmost importance to its relations with Central Asian countries as it considers it as part of India's 'Extended Neighbourhood'. This has been manifested by the continuous efforts taken in this direction, in particular, the institutionalization of the 'India-Central Asia Summit' mechanism. There have been frequent high-level visits between India and Central Asian countries that has led to further strengthening of India's relations with the Central Asian countries. Prime Minister paid a historic visit to all Central Asian countries in 2015. External Affairs Minister also visited Central Asian countries in 2018 and 2021. The India-Central Asia dialogue at the level of Foreign Ministers was launched in 2019 and held again in 2021.

India's relations with Central Asian countries have been close and friendly underpinned by centuries-old civilizational and cultural ties. There has been a concerted focus by all sides to enhance and expand economic cooperation, including in the energy sector. The establishment of the India-Central Asia Business Council and the proposals related to setting up of Joint Working Group on Chabahar, Task Force on IT/IteS, Investment Club etc, are important steps in this regard.

India and the Central Asian countries have also agreed to establish a mechanism of regular meetings at the level of NSA / Secretaries of the Security Council to discuss various security related challenges in the region. The participation of the Secretaries of the Security Council of Central Asian countries in the Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan in New Delhi in November 2021 helped in evolving a common regional consensus on Afghanistan. It has also been agreed to set up a Joint Working Group on Afghanistan at senior officials level.
