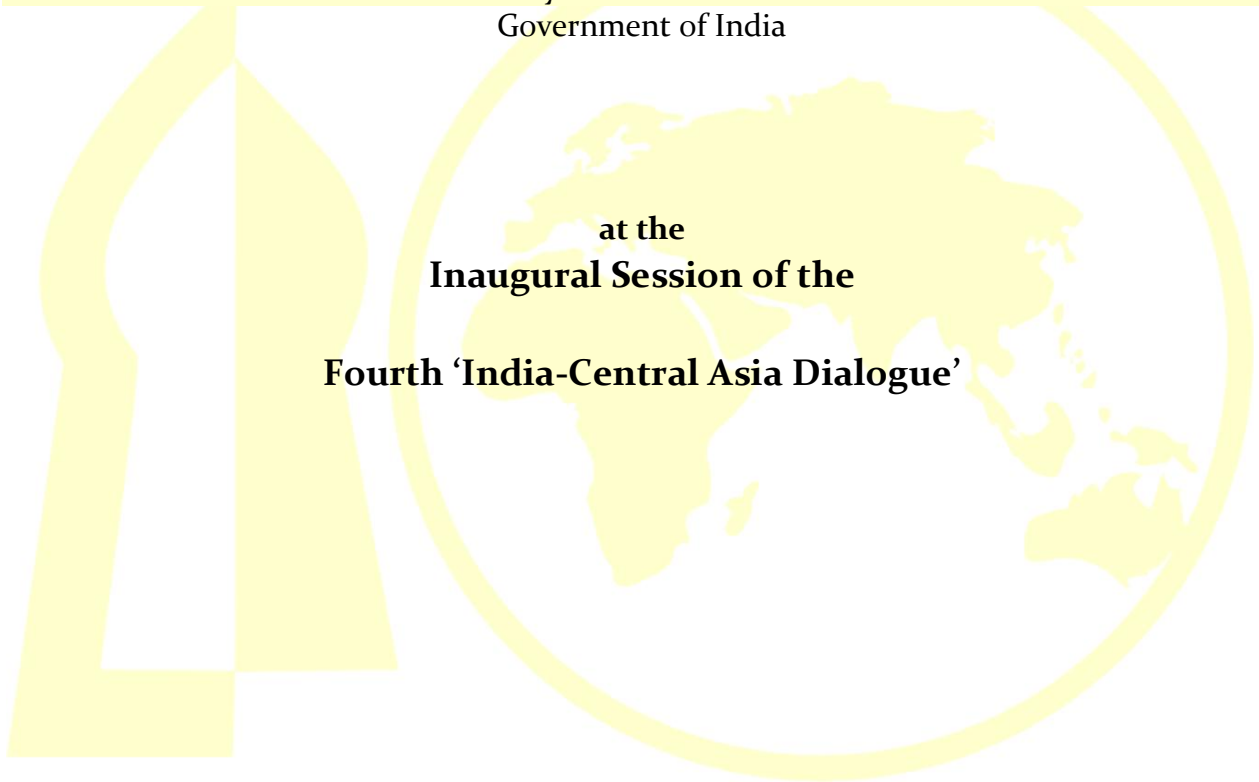


Remarks

by

Mr. G.V. Srinivas
Joint Secretary (Eurasia)
Ministry of External Affairs
Government of India



at the
Inaugural Session of the
Fourth 'India-Central Asia Dialogue'

at
Sapru House, New Delhi
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Several recent significant developments have helped India to transcend some barriers in connecting with its extended neighbourhood. Most important development has been Prime Minister Modi's bold and decisive move to visit to all the five Central Asian in 2015 raised the profile of our bilateral relationship with these countries and the region as a whole to an unprecedented high. He found a more than ready and keen leadership in all these countries to strengthen relations with India.

1. Iran is emerging as an important conduit in connectivity with the landlocked Central Asian region. Goods are exported from India to Central Asian Republics (CARs) mainly through Bandar Abbas, Iran.



Shri G.V. Srinivas, Joint Secretary (Eurasia), Ministry of External Affairs delivering his remarks at the Inaugural Session.

2. INSTC is trying to not only improve hard infrastructure on ground but also put in soft infrastructure for seamless movements of goods across borders. India is and is actively drawing up, in consultation with other INSTC members, a standard Customs protocol to facilitate seamless movement of products on this corridor. This route taking 40% less time compared to classical route at present faces challenge from depressed energy prices, overall reduced global trade and slashing of prices of containers on the sea route. In months and years ahead, INSTC would not only have

to confirm to businessmen and freight forwarders its competitive edge but also firmly establish its exclusive advantage in terms of reduced fumigation required for grains and other agricultural products.

3. PM Modi's visit to Iran in May 2016 and signing of the Chabahar Agreement with Iran resurrected India's Connect Central Asia Policy by opening up new trade routes. Those agreements, besides providing India a gateway to landlocked Central Asian Republics, have also offered these countries an access to warm waters via the port of Chabahar to maximise their economic gains.
4. In pursuit of its ambition to enlarge connectivity options, India has submitted its expression of interest to join Ashgabat Agreement to the depository State Turkmenistan.
5. We hope to the culmination of the more than decade long association with SCO by participating as a full member at the next SCO Summit of Heads of State in Astana in June 2017. This will provide an opportunity to our leadership to meet and interact with all their counterparts from Central Asia every year.
6. We believe that the first fruit of development must go to those who need it most. The primary responsibility of governance is to improve the quality of life of every citizen, with greatest attention being paid to the least fortunate. The prosperous often forget that wealth, like knowledge, increases when it is shared, and shrivels when it is hoarded.
7. We believe in shared prosperity. India is already engaged with several SCO member states in diverse areas such as capacity building and human resource development, information technology, pharmaceuticals and health care, small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurship development. We would specifically like to share our experience in economic areas like banking, capital markets and micro-finance. India has since successfully implemented projects like centres of IT excellence, entrepreneurship development centres, industrial training centres and working on a flagship projects such as a pan e-network project to impart tele-education and tele-medicine in the region.
8. India is interested in expanding its ties with the region as it will promote security, stability, economic growth and development of all countries. Good relations with

India will provide an assured market to these countries. India is the fastest growing economy in the world today and can be a stable, assured, expanding market for these countries.

9. As the key sponsor of the initiative of International Solar Alliance, India would very much like to see Central Asian Republics to be a part of alliance as partner countries. From remote corners of Pamir's to the distant cold desert of Kazakhstan solar energy can play a key role in development of standard of living of population. India welcomes all the Central Asian Republics to be a part of ISA to benefit from research, development, training, sharing of good practices and tapping of this natural resource especially in remote areas far off the electricity grid.
10. Agriculture is a promising untapped area and fits into priorities of food security that all our nations follow. Many of the fields that hold potential for win-win collaboration between India and Central Asia include high yielding and better seeds, cotton and potato cultivation, green house for cultivation of vegetables, fruits and flowers, new technology for drip irrigation, agricultural implements and storage technologies and market access.
11. A remarkable commonality between India and Central Asian Republics is that both are significant producers of cotton. Unfortunately there is little dialogue and coordination between India and Central Asian Republics as cotton producers. There could be a "cotton road" connecting our policy formulation in the area of cotton farming, development of cotton seeds, coordination of marketing of cotton and development of upstream and downstream industries surrounding cotton.
12. Telemedicine has begun functioning and is likely to grow as its efficacy in bridging distances and bringing expertise to the reaches of thee needy patient becomes a common knowledge. As per the roadmap, Phase 1 consists in Telemedicine rollout for Kyrgyzstan including setting up of Network Operating Centre (NOC) in New Delhi or at School Of Telemedicine & Bio Medical Informatics (STBMI) at Sanjay Gandhi Post Graduate Institute of Medical Sciences (SGPGIMS), Lucknow. The link is already being put to active use by doctors and patients in Kyrgyzstan and specialists in India. Phase 2 would be consolidation of the gains from the experience and action plan how the system can be taken to the other places. Parallely, entrepreneurs from India are also supplementing through their endeavours that they call telemedicine lounges.

13. As we have more and more students and trainees studying and learning in other country, we need to ensure that their careers are not adversely affected for want of differences in our educational systems. We will have to see how to ensure that differing number of school years, 12 in India and 11 in CAR, does not become an irritant. We will have to see how the Indian students pursuing medical degrees in Central Asia are empowered through adequate training and knowledge to successfully practice medicine where they wish.
14. Our initiative to celebrate International Yoga Day on 21 Jun received wide support from Central Asia and active participation during the two years that they have been hitherto organized. Indian systems of medicine receive ready welcome and our AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga and Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy) Centers are popular. A lot more is possible to bring health and happiness to our people through this centuries old knowledge and wisdom.
15. Present level of air connectivity between India and Central Asia does not reflect the potential in mutual tourism between our two regions. We look forward to many more flights based on mutual accommodation, including 5th freedom rights, and co-development of infrastructure for tourism including medical tourism into India. For the purpose of tourism Central Asia is as near as the traditional tourist destinations for large number of Indians who are touring abroad every year. India has emerged as one of the major sources of tourists in Uzbekistan.
16. Visitor friendly visa regimes would further encourage people to people exchanges at all levels which is mandatory to bring two nations closer.
17. We need to further strengthen our cooperation in the area of television, cinema and the audio-visual media. In this context, we are happy to see that the Star Television is doing auditions as we speak including of artistes from Central Asia for a music show that will be telecast next year.
18. An important area to pursue would be to see how India's accumulated expertise and experience in the area of space for development be utilized to share the rich dividends that it offers with our Central Asian partners. Our Earth Observation (EO) programme comprising of Indian Remote Sensing (IRS) satellite systems having thematic series of satellites viz. RESOURCESAT, CARTOSAT, OCEANSAT and satellites for weather and atmosphere supporting multitude of applications in the

areas of natural resources management, infrastructure planning, ecosystem and environment, ocean & atmosphere and disaster management should be studied for applications in our partner countries.

19. We can also offer 9 months long Post-Graduate Programme or short-term training courses on Remote Sensing & GIS; Satellite communication; satellite meteorology; and Space & Atmospheric sciences.
20. Satellite images could be used to generate various geo-databases on land resources including Digital Elevation models. Space technology inputs could be effectively used in agriculture for crop acreage and production forecasting, inventorying of fodder crops, irrigation infrastructure mapping, soil and water conservation through watershed management in rain-fed areas.
21. Disaster Management Support Programme for providing aero-space derived information support for the decision makers would be another area for our meaningful collaboration in a geography prone to natural disasters. This could include landslides hazard zonation event based damage assessment for landslide and earthquake, agricultural drought assessment and monitoring, heavy rain monitoring, vulnerability and risk analysis of hazards associated with snow and glaciers, etc.
22. Building a satellite for our Central Asian partners and offer launch services for such satellite could be an area worth consideration. ANTRIX Corporation Limited, the commercial arm of Department of Space, has so far launched 79 satellites belonging to 21 countries on commercial basis using Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV). ANTRIX has also jointly built two communication satellites for European customers.

Thank you.
