

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS**

**LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.625
TO BE ANSWERED ON 05.02.2020**

SAARC MEETING

625. SHRI ACHYUTANANDA SAMANTA:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware that South Asia is going through challenges such as terrorism, poverty, unemployment, climate change and trade war between China and US, and since 2014 no South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit has been hosted by any member country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government is willing to utilize the platform of SAARC to improve connectivity and trade in the region; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

**THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[SHRI V. MURALEEDHARAN]**

(a) & (b) The Government is aware of challenges in South Asia, with cross-border terrorism being the most serious of those challenges.

(c) & (d) SAARC, set up as an organization to build a connected and integrated South Asia, aims at promoting the development and progress of all countries in the region. India continues to support various initiatives to achieve closer cooperation in diverse areas. However, regional cooperation is adversely affected due to continued support to cross-border terrorism and interference in the internal affairs of member states by one country.

As regards trade, the Agreement on South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) that entered into force in 2006 seeks to promote and enhance mutual trade and economic cooperation among the member states. The SAARC Agreement on Trade in Services (SATIS) has been in effect from November 2012.

To enhance connectivity in the region, the initiatives in the SAARC framework include SAARC Regional Railways and Motor Vehicles Agreement. These were proposed in 2014, but have not been concluded yet. A draft Regional Air Services Agreement is also under consideration.
