

Statement by Mr Pon Radhakrishnan,
Hon'ble Union Minister of State for
Road Transport, Highways & Shipping of the Republic of India at
the “Global Sustainable Transport Conference”
Ashgabat
(November 26-27, 2016)

On behalf of the Government of India, I would like to compliment the Government of Turkmenistan and the United Nations for organizing this very important first ever Global Conference on Sustainable Transport in this beautiful white city Ashgabat. I particularly would like to congratulate the President of Turkmenistan H.E. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov for his initiative to convene the “Global Sustainable Transport Conference” having taken the lead by actively participating in several transport/transit corridor projects and having completed already besides its resolutions in this regard at the UN. The unanimous resolutions on the subject at the UNGA indicate the importance attached to sustainable transport by one and all. In a globalized world, connectivity plays the critical role in increasing the trade and economic activity leading to prosperity particularly when these corridors reduce the time and cost of transport of goods across the continents/regions and connect the landlocked countries.

2. Sustainable transport systems make a positive contribution to the environmental, social and economic sustainability of the communities they serve. India has embarked on development of smart cities, fuel efficiency and emission norms, alternate fuels, electric and hybrid vehicles etc to ensure the sustainable transport systems are promoted.

3. The fuel efficiency norms have been tightened for four wheelers, which will lead to considerable decline in fuel consumption and result in cleaner environment. My country is all set to adopt BS-VI compliant Vehicles by the year 2020. Further, the standards for use of bio-diesel, flex fuel and ethanol have been laid down in the Central Motor Vehicle Rules. Bio-CNG is another clean fuel which has been already notified. India is also promoting the manufacture and use of electric and hybrid electric vehicles for which the procedures for electric and hybrid vehicles have been introduced in market for pilot/demonstration projects intended for Government Scheme. It is also proposed to adopt a countrywide mandatory regime of automated vehicle fitness programme with effect from October, 2018.

4. India always played and continues to play an important role in promoting and establishing the regional connectivity. A major constraint for trade between India and Eurasia has been logistics on sea route and hence, INSTC route is being explored by India and other member-countries which include Iran, Russia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan etc which according to a study, will reduce distance by 40% and thereby significant reduction in cost. The entry of Turkmenistan into INSTC will further strengthen this route. India has held several meetings during the last one year to discuss harmonization of custom duties, tariffs etc. on this route.

5. I am happy to recall that during the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Ashgabat in July 2015, India initiated the process to join another transit/transport corridor 'Ashgabat Agreement' initiated in this very city in order to provide connectivity to the Gulf. The train route between Kazakhstan–Turkmenistan–Iran inaugurated in December 2014 has also been playing an important role in connectivity between South Asia and Eurasia.

6.. India, Iran and Afghanistan have recently signed an agreement on Chahbahar port in Iran, which is also a step towards providing an efficient and effective transport link to Central Asia and Eurasian continent. India also supports harmonization of road/railway tariffs, custom duties, procedures involved in transports across the borders to make the global transport more sustainable and trade friendly.

7. India has one of the largest road and rail networks in the world. The rail tracks are about 115,000 km and the roads including rural roads are about 5 million km. However, there is huge scope for expansion and improvement to meet the international standards and about USD 1.5 trillion is expected to be invested in development of infrastructure in the coming years. India, today, is the fastest growing large economies of the world and with a projected GDP growth rate of 7.6%. The 'Make in India' initiative of the Government of India will require the transit/transport corridors for movement of goods/materials both ways. The development of transnational transit/transport networks will be a win-win situation for all the participants due to the interdependency of the economies. The TAPI gas pipeline project has seen rapid progress in the past two years with the initiative of the President of Turkmenistan. It is learnt that the construction of the pipeline inside Turkmenistan also has begun. The leaders of the TAPI countries also envision development of road, rail and communication lines along this pipeline. The pipeline will not only supply energy to the growing and energy hungry South Asian economies but also is likely to bring peace and prosperity along its route.

8. I wish all those who have gathered here most fruitful deliberations towards development and sustainable transport systems in the world.

9. I also take this opportunity to convey our gratitude to the President and the government of Turkmenistan for the excellent arrangements made for the conference and also the generous hospitality extended to me and my delegation.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.

