

## **India, Central Asia must reconnect: Modi**

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**Dushanbe (Tajikistan):** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday said India and Central Asia must reconnect - through surface, digital and air connectivity.

"Today I complete my tour of Central Asia. I return to India convinced that India and Central Asia must reconnect. It is important for the future that we seek for our countries and our region," the prime minister said.

"So, we will improve our surface connectivity, as well as our digital and air connectivity. We will reach you through Iran and other Central Asian countries," he said and hoped India and Tajikistan can connect directly, "as we once were in history".

Modi also assured all cooperation to Tajikistan in the field of agriculture.

In his remarks at the Workshop of Agriculture Cooperation in Dushanbe, Modi said India's agricultural experiences and solutions would be more relevant to Tajikistan than what more advanced nations may have to offer.

"Nothing will give us more joy than the opportunity to share all that we have with our friends. We would be happy to open the doors of our institutions to your scientists and experts," he said at the event attended by President Emomali Rahmon.

Modi said India was self-sufficient in food grains and one of the major exporters of farm produce and animal products.

"We are the world's largest producer of milk, one of the top producers of fruits and vegetables and one of the three leading producers of fisheries. Along the way, we have created a resource base that will be of great value to our friends in Tajikistan," Modi said, addressing an audience of more than 2,000 people.

He said India has world class institutions of research and training in agriculture, dairy and livestock under every possible climatic condition.

"We have developed farming techniques and farm equipment that are affordable and effective. We have created the most successful cooperative movement in dairy and one of the best dairy processing industries in the world.

"We have good seeds and processing technology and equipment. Some of these might be especially useful for cotton farming. And, we have done well with micro irrigation systems."

He said India has still a lot of challenges in agriculture, but there were many new initiatives to make farms yield more and farmers more prosperous.

He suggested many ways in which India can help Tajikistan in agriculture.

"We can help in increasing the range of crops you produce and the number of crops you get in a year. Greenhouse cultivation is a process that will be well suited for Tajikistan."

He proposed that India could collaborate in developing hybrids of cotton and wheat, share the experience in contract farming and developing the dairy industry, including dairy processing plants.

Modi proposed that India could work with Tajikistan in water conservation and micro-irrigation, in improving the health of the farm soil, and also using space technology for better resource management.

"India and Tajikistan are strategic partners. This is one of our closest and most important relationships in the region. Our cooperation in agriculture is central to the shared vision and aspirations of India and Tajikistan," Modi said.

Modi later unveiled a bust of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore in Dushanbe.

President Rahmon said "India's success is based on following ideals of great thinkers like Rabindranath Tagore".

- IANS