



INDIA-KYRGYZ REPUBLIC BILATERAL RELATIONS

1. Historically, India has had close contacts with Central Asia, especially countries which were part of the ancient Silk Route, including Kyrgyz Republic. During the Soviet era, India and the then Kyrgyz Republic had limited political, economic and cultural contacts. Former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi visited Bishkek and Issyk-Kul Lake in 1985. After the independence of Kyrgyz Republic on 31 August, 1991, India was among the first to establish diplomatic relations on 18 March 1992; and the resident Mission of India was set up on 23 May 1994.
2. Political ties with the Kyrgyz Republic have been traditionally warm and friendly. Kyrgyz Republic supported India in securing full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and also supports India's bid for permanent seat at UNSC. Both countries share common concerns on threats of terrorism, extremism and drug-trafficking. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1992, the two countries have signed several framework agreements, including on Culture, Trade and Economic Cooperation, Civil Aviation, Investment Promotion and Protection, Avoidance of Double Taxation, Consular Convention etc.
3. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi had visited Kyrgyz Republic on 11- 12 July, 2015 during his historic Central Asia visit. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Kyrgyz Republic on June 13-14, 2019 to attend the meeting of Council of Heads of State of Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Prime Minister also paid an official visit to the Kyrgyz Republic on 14 June, 2019 after the conclusion of the SCO Summit. During the visit, India and the Kyrgyz Republic established Strategic Partnership and signed the Joint Declaration on Establishing Strategic Partnership. 15 documents, including Bilateral Investment Treaty, Road map on Trade and Economic Cooperation between the Republic of India and the Kyrgyz Republic for the Five-Year period (2019-2024), MoU on Cooperation in the field of Health, MoU between Export-Import Bank of India and the Investment Promotion and Protection Agency of the Kyrgyz Republic, MoU between India and the Kyrgyz Republic on cooperation on Information and Communication Technology, MoU on cooperation in the field of Legal Metrology, MoU between Research and Information System for Developing Countries (RIS) of India and National Institute of Strategic Studies (NISS) of the Kyrgyz Republic were signed during the visit.
4. The 10th India- Kyrgyz Republic Foreign Office Consultations took place in Bishkek on 20 April, 2019. The Kyrgyz delegation was led by Deputy Foreign Minister and the Indian side was led by Secretary (West).
5. The India- Kyrgyz Republic Inter Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation was set up in 1992. 9th Session of India- Kyrgyz Republic Inter Governmental Commission (IGC) on Trade & Economic Scientific and Technological Cooperation was held on 15- 16 November, 2018 in New Delhi.
6. EAM visited the Kyrgyz Republic on 03-04 August 2018, during her three nation tour of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. Kyrgyz Foreign Minister, Mr. Chingiz Aidarbekov, visited India from 27- 31 January, 2019. RM visited Kyrgyzstan for the SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting on 28-29 April, 2019. EAM visited Bishkek on 21-22 May, 2019 to attend the SCO Foreign Ministers' Meeting.
7. Bilateral trade between India and Kyrgyz Republic in 2017-18 was about USD 59.53 million, of which India's exports were worth USD 28.59 million and imports were valued at USD 30.94 million. A five year roadmap to enhance trade and investments as the present state is far below potential was

signed between India and the Kyrgyz Republic on 14 June, 2019 during the visit of Prime Minister to Bishkek.

8. Connectivity remains one of the biggest challenges for trade between India and Kyrgyz Republic. Air Manas (Pegasus Asia Airline) had started direct flight on Bishkek-Delhi-Bishkek sector since 20 February 2015. The flight operates thrice a week, and has contributed significantly to growth of tourism.
9. Technical assistance under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Program, particularly in terms of human resources development, is an important component of India's economic involvement in Kyrgyz Republic. Kyrgyz Republic has utilized 77 slots for 2017-18. More than 1274 professionals from Kyrgyz Republic have received training in India since 1992. 80 ITEC slots have been sanctioned for 2018-19.
10. Bilateral cooperation between the two countries has steadily increased in recent years. Agreement on Defence Cooperation, signed during the visit of Prime Minister Modi in July 2015, has been an important milestone that has laid the framework for defence cooperation between the two sides.
11. Joint Special Forces Exercise KHANJAR has now become an annual affair. The sixth 'Khanjar' exercise was conducted between Indian and Kyrgyz Special Forces in March, 2019 in Bishkek. Fifth exercise was conducted in India in CIJW School, Varaingte (Mizoram) in 2018.
12. There is a great appreciation for Indian culture. Mission in Bishkek has established an India Study Centre in the prestigious National Library of Kyrgyz Republic on 14 November 2014. The Center is running with the help of volunteers and imparts training in English and Hindi languages, Yoga and Kathak. Another center has been opened in Kara Balta, near Bishkek. Numerous Kathak, yoga, Indian dance, fusion music and Bollywood workshops/concerts have been organized to propagate and popularise Indian culture and traditions.
13. There are about 100 Indian nationals apart from 8000 students in Kyrgyz Republic. An Agreement establishing visa free regime for diplomatic and/or official/service passports has been effective from April, 2014.

INDIA-TURKMENISTAN RELATIONS

India enjoys close, friendly and historical ties with Turkmenistan. „Turkmen Gate“ built in Delhi in memory of great Turkmen Saint Shams-ul-Arifeen Shan Turkmen Bayabani, who is believed to have lived in India during 13th Century, bears testimony to this friendship. In modern times bilateral relations have been strengthened by regular high-level visits. Hon“ble President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov visited India in May 2010. Hon“ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi visited Turkmenistan in July 2015. During these visits, several significant MoUs and agreements were signed.

Institutional mechanisms between the two governments, namely Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) and Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) further buttress bilateral cooperation. The last FOC was held in January 2021 and the last IGC was held in August 2017. India and Turkmenistan cooperate under the India-Central Asia Dialogue mechanism as well, last iteration of which was held in October 2020.

Culture: Indian Cinema and TV serials are popular with Turkmen people. Similarly, Indian music also holds a special place in the hearts of Turkmen people. Indian film festivals are held on regular basis in different cities in Turkmenistan. A Turkmen Cultural delegation visited India in November, 2016 for performance in Delhi and Chennai on the occasion of 25th Anniversary of Turkmenistan's Independence. An Indian cultural troupe performed at a friendship concert at Berkerar Mall in Ashgabat on 26th January 2017 as part of Indian's Republic Day celebration. „India Cultural Week“ including exhibition, dance performance, film and food festival was celebrated in Ashgabat in May 2017 to mark 25th Anniversary of Diplomatic Relations

between India and Turkmenistan. An Indian Tabla group visited Turkmenistan for participation in International Scientific Conference and festival "Ancient Cradle of Musical Art" organized by State Cultural Centre of Turkmenistan in April, 2018. A 14-member group "Bollywood Rockers" performed in Turkmenistan in August 2019. An 11-member Turkmen Cultural Folk Group "Galkynysh" visited India to participate in the International Folk Dance and Music Festival in December 2018.

Traditional Medicine and Yoga Centre: Central Asia's first Yoga and Traditional Medicine Centre was inaugurated by Hon'ble PM of India in Ashgabat in July 2015. Yoga Teacher and Ayurveda Expert have been deputed to the centre from India and offer classes / consultations to interested people.

Education: India provides training for Turkmen nationals under its ITEC programme. Since the inception of the programme for Turkmenistan in 1994, over 400 Turkmen nationals have been trained in various courses. In addition, India provides ICCR Scholarships to students from Turkmenistan to pursue graduation, post-graduation and Ph. D. There are currently over 300 Students from Turkmenistan pursuing their higher education in various reputed universities in India. In 2010, a Hindi Chair was established by India in Azadi Institute of World languages, Ashgabat where Hindi is being taught to university students.

Air links with Turkmenistan: Turkmenistan Airlines operated 3 direct flights to New Delhi and 6 flights to Amritsar a week which are currently suspended due to Covid-19 pandemic.

INDIAN COMMUNITY IN TURKMENISTAN: There are very few Indian nationals in Turkmenistan. Most are semi-skilled workers employed in construction sector. There are also a few engineers, professionals and technicians working in oil and gas sector. There are no Indian Associations or Indian students in Turkmenistan. Useful Resources: Embassy of India, Ashgabat website: <http://www.eoi.gov.in/ashgabat>

INDIA - KAZAKHSTAN BILATERAL RELATIONS

Background

Relations between India and Kazakhstan are ancient and historical going back to more than 2000 years. There has been a constant and regular exchange in goods and, more importantly, exchange of ideas and cultural influences. The journey of Buddhism from India to Central Asia and Sufi ideas from Central Asia to India are two such examples.

Political relations

India was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of Kazakhstan. Diplomatic relations were established in February 1992. The Embassy of India was opened in Almaty in May 1992 and the Embassy of Kazakhstan in New Delhi in 1993. The capital of Kazakhstan was shifted from Almaty to Astana in 1997. Subsequently, the Embassy of India opened its Representative Office in Astana on September 15, 2003. The Embassy moved to Astana (Renamed Nur-Sultan from March 2019) in November 2007 and Representative Office to Almaty.

India and Kazakhstan are strategic partners since 2009. The first Prime Minister of India Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru accompanied by daughter Indira Gandhi visited Almaty in 1955. Dr. Radhakrishnan visited Kazakhstan in 1956 in his capacity as Vice President. The first President Nursultan Nazarbayev visited India in February 1992. Thereafter, he visited India in 1993 (transit visit), 1996, 2002 and 2009. He was the Chief Guest at the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on January 26, 2009. Prime Minister of India Shri Narsimha Rao visited Kazakhstan in 1993, Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee in June 2002, Dr. Manmohan Singh in April 2011 and Shri Narendra Modi in July 2015 (bilateral visit) and June 2017 [Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit]. Vice-Presidents of India Shri K.R. Narayanan and Shri Hamid Ansari visited

Kazakhstan in 1996 and 2008 respectively. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi participated in the 17th SCO Summit in Astana on June 8-9, 2017. India was admitted as a full member of the SCO during the Summit. Gen V.K. Singh (Retd), Minister of State for Ministry of External Affairs visited Kazakhstan on 14-15 December, 2014 to participate in the SCO heads of Government meeting held in Astana. Shri M.J, Akbar, Minister of State for Ministry of External Affairs visited Kazakhstan on 16-17 November, 2017. External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj paid an official visit to Kazakhstan on 2-3 August 2018. Raksha Mantri, Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman visited Kazakhstan on October 2-4, 2018 on a bilateral visit. Dr. Satya Pal Singh, Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Resource Development visited Kazakhstan to attend the 7th Meeting of Education Ministers of SCO Member States held on 15-18 October, 2019 in Nur-Sultan. Shri J. P. Nadda, Minister of Health and Family Welfare visited Kazakhstan to attend the Global Conference on Primary Health Care held on 25-28 October, 2019 in Nur-Sultan. Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha Shri Hari Vansh visited Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan to attend the 4th meeting of Speakers of the Eurasian Countries' Parliaments on 22-25 September, 2019. Shri V Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs visited Kazakhstan to attend the Astana club meeting held in Nur-Sultan on 11-12 November, 2019.

H.E. Mr. Askar Zhumagaliyev, Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan visited India on 20-22 September, 2018. H.E. Mr. Kanat Bozymbayev, Minister of Energy accompanied by H.E. Mr. Yermek Kosherbayev, Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan visited India to attend Petrotech-2019 on 10-12 February 2019 held in New Delhi. Mr. Ilyin Yuri Viktorovich, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan visited India to attend the 10th meeting of the Heads of Officers of the SCO member states on joint urban earthquake search and rescue exercise held on 4-7 November, 2019 in New Delhi.

India and Kazakhstan actively cooperate under the aegis of multilateral fora including CICA (Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia), SCO and the UN organizations. India has been a consistent supporter of Kazakhstan's initiative on CICA and is actively participating in the process. Kazakhstan supports India's permanent membership in an expanded UNSC and has extended its support for India's non-permanent membership in 2021-22. India supported Kazakhstan's successful candidature for non-permanent membership of UNSC in 2017-18.

Institutional Mechanisms

Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) at the level of Deputy Foreign Ministers/Secretary (West) are held to discuss the entire range of bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest. The last (6th FOC) was held in Astana in March 2015.

The India-Kazakhstan Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) established in 1993 is the apex bilateral institutional mechanism for developing trade, economic, scientific, technological, industrial and cultural cooperation between the two countries. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on the Indian side and Ministry of Energy on the Kazakh side are the nodal ministries with respective Ministers as the co-chairs of the Commission. The last IGC meeting was held in Astana on Sep 19-20, 2017. Several Joint Working Groups (JWGs) have been established in the areas of Counter Terrorism, Trade & Economic Cooperation, Defence & Military Technical Cooperation, Information Technology, Hydrocarbons, Textiles, Tea Debt and Space Cooperation, Health and Transport, Connectivity & Logistics to take forward bilateral relations in the respective spheres. The 1st meeting of India-Kazakhstan JWG on connectivity, transport and logistics was recently held on 26 November 2019 in New Delhi.

Defence Cooperation

The Indo-Kazakh Defence Cooperation is carried out under the framework of an agreement on 'Defence and Military Technical cooperation' signed in July 2015 during the visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister to

Kazakhstan on 8 July 2015. The agreement includes various areas including conduct of joint training, exercises, military-technical cooperation, UN peacekeeping. Kazakh Armed Forces Unit underwent training on peacekeeping operations in India in April-May 2018 for deployment under an Indian Battalion at the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, then Raksha Mantri visited Kazakhstan on 2-4 October, 2018 to flag off the first rotation of the Kazakh contingent jointly deployed with the Indian Battalion in UNIFIL, the historic first in the annals of UN Peacekeeping.

Trade & Economy

Kazakhstan is India's largest trade and investment partner in Central Asia. As per statistics of Kazakhstan for 2019 [from January to November], total bilateral trade between India and Kazakhstan amounted to US\$ 1.56 billion, out of which exports from Kazakhstan was to the tune of US\$ 1299.1 million, and exports from India was US\$ 267.9 million. The 6th JWG meeting on Trade and Economy took place in Astana on 12 July 2018.

FICCI and Chamber of International Commerce of Kazakhstan have set up a Joint Business Council (JBC) to promote trade, economic and investment cooperation between the two countries. The second meeting of the JBC was held in New Delhi on 16 February 2018.

APEDA (The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority), responsible for promoting Indian agro-products, visited Almaty and Astana in June 2018 and conducted wet sampling of different varieties of Indian mangoes in prominent stores of Kazakhstan. This was received with great enthusiasm by the people of Kazakhstan. Similarly, a Tea delegation visited Almaty in August 2018 and conducted tea promotion events and held B2B meetings. EEPC India (Engineering Export Promotion Council of India) under the aegis of Ministry of Commerce and Industry organized India pavilion at Kazbuild and Aquatherm 2019 which was held at Almaty, Kazakhstan on 4- 6 September, 2019. In the India Pavilion, around 30 Indian engineering companies participated to showcase their product and capabilities in the areas of Construction material and Equipment, hardware and tools, Roofing and Technology, window Décor, HVAC equipments and Services, Water purification, Accessories and Valves. A delegation led by CAPEXIL comprising 18 Indian companies exhibited their products at the Kazcomak Expo held in Almaty on 18-20 September 2019 and also held B2B meetings with local businessmen. Ministries of Tourism from the states of Kerala, Rajasthan and delegates from Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India and businessmen from Indian tourism sector attended the PATA Travel Mart 2019 held in Nur-Sultan on 18-20 September, 2019 to promote tourism in India.

Cultural relations

India and Kazakhstan enjoy close cultural relations that manifest in popularity of yoga, Indian films, dance and music in Kazakhstan. Swami Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Nur-Sultan is engaged in various cultural activities, including conducting of yoga, dance and music classes; celebration of Indian festivals. India provides scholarships in various disciplines under the ICCR Scholarship programmes for students from Kazakhstan.

There are 15 slots allocated to Kazakhstan under General Scholarship Scheme under ICCR. The programme is open to all eligible participants from Kazakhstan. The courses offered including i) Agriculture, Food and Fertilizers, ii) Artificial Intelligence, iii) Banking, Finance, Accounts and Audit, iv) Cyber Technologies, v) Education, vi) Engineering and Technology, vii) Hindi Language, viii) Environmental and Climatic Changes, ix) Government Function, x) health and Yoga, xi) Human Resource Development and Planning etc. which are conducted by reputed institutions in India. While mission nominates the candidates through online portal, the final selection is done by the University/Institute.

The Study in India programme by the Government of India under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Resources Development in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs being provided in the CIS countries including Kazakhstan. The programme involves partnership with 100 premier education institutes in India including IITs, NITs, IIMs and premiere private colleges of India.

ITEC/Development Assistance

India provides capacity building assistance to Kazakhstan in various specialized fields under ITEC program sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs. Since 1992, more than 1000 specialists have undergone training under ITEC programme. At the request of Ministry of Education & Science, a special six-week Teacher Training Course in English for 25 teachers of Kazakhstan was organized under the ITEC Programme at EFLU, Hyderabad from 25 June to 3 August 2018. Similar programme was organized for 2019- 20.

Consular

India and Kazakhstan have an agreement on visa free entry for Diplomatic and Official Passport holders. Ordinary passport holders require visa. Since February 2018, Indian has extended e-visa facility to Kazakh citizens. Since April 2018, Kazakhstan has introduced a 72-hour visa-free regime for transiting Indian national. This is applicable to Indian passengers who are transiting via international airports in Nur-Sultan and or Almaty, Shymkent, Aktau, Karaganda, Taraz to a third country or returning from a third country via one of the mentioned international airports. The 72 hour transit visa free regime is generally applicable to both individual passengers and tour groups. With effect from July 1, 2018, Kazakhstan has removed the condition of registration of Indian nationals visiting the country. Kazakhstan has also introduced electronic visa facility for travelers from India with effect from 1st January 2019.

Indian community

The size of the Indian community is about 7,800 in Kazakhstan. Out of this, about 5,300 are Indian students, about 2,280 are construction workers and the rest are in various professional fields.

BRIEF ON INDIA-UZBEKISTAN BILATERAL RELATIONS

India and Uzbekistan have relations that go back in history. In recent years, there has been significant intensification in bilateral ties, mainly due to the visit of PM in July 2015 and June 2016 to Tashkent; the opening up of Uzbekistan by President Mirziyoyev; and President Mirziyoyev's visit to India in October 2018 and in January 2019. Bilateral relations now encompass a wider canvas, including on political and strategic issues, defence and security, trade and investment, energy, agriculture, S&T, education and people-to-people ties.

High Level visits/meetings

Visit of PM: PM visited Uzbekistan on July 6-7, 2015, during which he held bilateral talks with the then President Islam Karimov on advancing our strategic partnership. An Agreement on cooperation in the field of Tourism; a Protocol on cooperation between the Foreign Ministries; and a Programme of Cultural Cooperation for year 2015-2017 was signed during the visit. PM also visited Uzbekistan in June 2016 as part of the meeting of the Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

Visit of President of Uzbekistan: President Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited India from 30 September-1 October 2018. During the visit, 17 Agreements/MoUs were signed, including in areas of S&T cooperation, agriculture, tourism, military education, justice, health and medical science, pharmaceuticals, space, and other areas.

President Mirziyoyev participated in the Vibrant Gujarat Summit as Guest of Honour in January 2019.

Visit of EAM/MOS: The then EAM visited Uzbekistan for the first India-Central Asia Dialogue at the Ministerial level in Samarkand in January 2019.

Visit of FM: Uzbek FM Abdulaziz Kamilov presented key-note address at the Raisina Dialogue in January 2020 in New Delhi. He met EAM and PM during the visit. FM Kamilov met EAM again in Moscow in September 2020 on the sidelines of the SCO FM meeting.

PM- President Virtual Summit: A Virtual Summit between PM Shri Narendra Modi and President Shavkat Mirziyoyev was held on 11 December 2020. Both sides discussed bilateral issues including in the fields of politics, development cooperation, security, space, education, development projects and regional issues including Afghanistan.

Regional Exchanges

State/Region Agreements: Agreements on establishment of cooperation between Andijan region and the State of Gujarat and between the cities of Samarkand and Agra were signed during the visit of Uzbek President in October 2018. Proposals for a similar agreement between Bukhara and Telangana is also under consideration.

Visit of CM Gujarat: Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Vijay Rupani led a 47-member delegation from Gujarat to Uzbekistan from 20-23 October 2019. The delegation attended the International Investment Forum "Open Andijan" in Andijan and visited Samarkand, Bukhara and Tashkent. Apart from meetings with the Governors of these regions and B2B Forums between Indian and Uzbek businessmen, the CM also met with President Mirziyoyev and DPM Ganiev. Chairman of Uzbek Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mr. A. Ikramov and Minister of Innovation Development, Ibrokhim Abdurakhmonov visited India from 28-30 November 2019 as a follow-up of the visit of Gujarat CM. Altogether, 45 agreements have been signed and 59 projects worth USD 992 million in different areas, including agriculture and agro-processing, chemicals and petrochemicals, textiles, pharma and healthcare, IT and innovation, energy, mining, and jewellery are being pursued. Both sides have also agreed to monitor and implement these projects through nodal points of contacts and regular follow up visits.

Parliamentary Exchanges

The last visit by Speaker of Oliy Majlis (Lower House of Uzbek Parliament) was in November 2005. Vice-President Shri Hamid Ansari led a parliamentary delegation to Uzbekistan in May 2013. An invitation to Lok Sabha Speaker from his Uzbek counterpart is under consideration. Uzbek side is also interested in a visit by the Chairman of the Senate of Uzbekistan to India.

Bilateral and multilateral Mechanisms

National Coordination Committees: India and Uzbekistan have set up National Coordination Committees to oversee the implementation of mutually agreed projects and initiatives. The Committee is led by MOS(VM) on the Indian side and comprises senior MEA officials and a representative from Government of Gujarat. On the Uzbek side, it is led by Sardor Umurzakov, Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Foreign Economic Affairs, Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade (MIFT) and includes First Deputy Foreign Minister, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), and senior officials from MIFT and Andijan. The first meeting of the Committee took place on 24 August 2020. Both sides reviewed projects through grant assistance, LOC and private investment proposals along with other aspects of bilateral cooperation in trade, investment and education fields.

Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC): The 12th session of the IGC on Trade, Economic, Scientific & Technological Cooperation was held on 04 December 2020 through video meeting. It was led by Special

Secretary (DOC) Shri B B Swain and 1st Deputy Minister for Investments and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan Mr. Laziz Kudratov.

FOC: The last (14th) round of Foreign Office Consultations was hosted by the Indian side in November 2020 through video meeting. The 13th round was held in Tashkent in March 2017.

JWG on CT: The last (8th) meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism was held in New Delhi in July 2019. Several areas for training and capacity building in the field of law enforcement and counter terrorism operations were sought by the Uzbek side.

India-Central Asia Business Council: Second meeting of the India-Central Asia Business Council was held on 20 October 2020 through VC with participation of Chairman of 3 Uzbek Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mr. A. Ikramov. The dialogue brought together Business Councils of all five Central Asian countries to take the trade and investment partnership forward with special focus on energy, pharmaceuticals, automotive, agro-processing, education, urban infrastructure and transport, civil aviation, IT and tourism.

India- Central Asia Dialogue: Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Mr. Kamilov participated in the 2nd India-Central Asia Dialogue held at the level of Foreign Ministers on 28 October 2020 which was hosted by India in the virtual mode.

Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry also participated in the 2nd India-Central Asia Business Council (ICABC) meeting which was hosted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) in virtual mode held on the same day. The report of the ICABC meeting was presented by FICCI later in the day to all the Foreign Ministers participating in the India-Central Asia Dialogue.

Defence Cooperation

Defence cooperation has acquired a new level of intensity following the visit of the then Defence Minister of Uzbekistan Maj. Gen. Abdusalam Azizov from 4-7 September 2018. Regular defence cooperation is carried out through annual plans. The Plan for 2019-20 included joint training of special forces, conduct of training capsules in military engineering for Uzbeks and exchanges between air forces for assistance in development of Qarshi Aviation School in Uzbekistan. India has also assisted in setting up an India Room at the Armed Forces Academy of Uzbekistan in Tashkent.

Visit of RM: RM visited Tashkent and Samarkand on 1-3 November 2019 and held bilateral discussions with his Uzbek counterpart Maj. Gen. Bakhodir Kurbanov. An MoU on Military Medicine was signed. As a follow up of MoU on Military Education signed in October 2018, two institutional level MoUs were also signed for cooperation in training and capacity building. RM inaugurated the first-ever joint military exercise between India and Uzbekistan from 4-14 November 2019. Earlier in the year, India and Uzbekistan held their first annual JWG on Defence in New Delhi on 27-28 February 2019 followed by a visit of Defence Secretary to Tashkent in March 2019.

As part of defence industrial cooperation, India has offered a Line of Credit of USD 40 million to Uzbekistan. India also organized two defence industrial workshops in September 2019 and November 2020 respectively during which representatives from public and private sector defence companies participated.

Security Cooperation

India and Uzbekistan share common perspectives on a number of security issues, including on terrorism, trans-national organized crime, illegal trafficking and smuggling, etc. The main focus of our engagement in this sphere has been to provide assistance to Uzbek security agencies through training and capacity building.

As part of the growing cooperation in the security sphere, Minister of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan Pulat Bobojonov visited India from 20-22 November 2019. During the visit, he held consultations with HM and the two Ministers signed an Agreement on Security Cooperation.

Bilateral Trade and Investments

Bilateral trade at about USD 355 million is well below potential. The major items of India's exports are pharmaceutical products, mechanical equipment, vehicle parts, services, optical instruments and equipment. India's import from Uzbekistan consist largely of fruit and vegetable products, services, fertilizers, juice products and extracts, and lubricants.

India and Uzbekistan have signed a Joint Statement in September 2019 to set up a joint feasibility for entering into negotiations for a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).

Notable Indian investments by Indian companies include those in the field of pharmaceuticals, amusement parks, automobile components, and hospitality industry. Indian majors like GMR have expressed interest in investment in airports, development of air corridor, Navoi cargo complex in Uzbekistan; KDAH (Ambani Hospital) from Mumbai has expressed interest in setting up a specialty hospital. During the visit of CM Gujarat, a ground breaking ceremony for setting up a pharmaceutical plant with an investment of USD 50 million was held. Investments in various fields, including pharma and healthcare, textiles and auto components, agriculture and food processing, and mining and jewellery sector are in various stages of discussion. In October 2019, Amity University and Sharda University have opened campuses in Tashkent and Andijan respectively. Indian institutions like iCreate are actively cooperating with Uzbek counterparts for promoting start-up ecosystem in Uzbekistan and training entrepreneurs in setting up incubators. Indian companies like Dev IT has entered into bilateral cooperation in field research, technologies, start-ups and innovations with 5 budding Uzbek partners. NTPC is also participating in various tenders including solar PV power plants and consultancy assignment for gas projects in Uzbekistan.

Bilateral Investment Treaty is under negotiation between both countries.

COOPERATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

India gifted HCQ and Paracetamol tablets sought by Uzbekistan, along with lifting ban on export of essential medicines to fight Covid-19. India also conducted e-ITEC programmes for capacity building of Medical professionals from Uzbekistan.

JWGS AND SECTORAL COOPERATION

Textiles: The 3rd meeting of the JWG on Textiles was held in Tashkent alongside the 11th IGC in August 2018.

IT: The 2nd meeting of the JWG on IT was held in Tashkent alongside the 11th IGC in August 2018. An expert from Software Technology Park of India (STPI) has been deputed to assist with establishment and further expansion of an IT Park in Tashkent. The first phase of IT Park was inaugurated in July 2019.

Pharmaceutical and Healthcare: This is a high priority for the Uzbek side. The 1st meeting of the JWG on Pharmaceutical and Healthcare was held in Tashkent alongside the 11th IGC in August 2018. Investment by Indian companies in pharma as well as medical care sectors has been a major focus for the Uzbek side.

Tourism: The 1st meeting of the JWG on Tourism (set up under an MoU signed in October 2018) was held in Tashkent alongside the 11th IGC in August 2018. On 1 April 2017, an e-Visa scheme was introduced for Uzbek nationals. The Uzbek government has also extended e-Visa facility to Indian tourists. Uzbekistan has also emerged as a significant source of medical tourism with about 8,000 Uzbeks annually seeking medical

treatment in India. India too has emerged as a growing source of tourists for Uzbekistan with about 40,000 tourists having visited in 2017.

Agriculture: The 1st meeting of the JWG on Agriculture (set up under an MoU signed in October 2018) was held on 5 September 2019 through DVC. During the visit of CM Gujarat, an agreement for cooperation in agro-processing sector, including the entire value chain comprising organic cultivation, cold storage, warehousing and processing was reached. The Uzbek government has pledged allotment of initially 35,000 hectares, increasing eventually to 50,000 hectares for this purpose.

India has granted market access for lemon and melon from Uzbekistan. Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) for plum and sweet cherries have been completed and while conveying this, we have sought additional information from the Uzbek side. Request for PRA of almonds have been received and being considered. Uzbekistan has granted market access for banana and mango from India. PRA for Soyabean oil cake has been completed though additional information sought is being provided. Request for PRA from India include wheat, wheat flour, potato, pomegranate and pomegranate seeds.

e-Governance and ICT: The Joint Committee on e-Governance and ICT has been envisaged under the MoU signed on 28 September 2018. It is yet to be formed.

S&T: A Joint Committee on S&T was formed in February 2019 as envisaged under an MoU signed in October 2018. In pursuance to the agreement, a Programme of Cooperation in S&T for the period of 2019-22 was signed in October 2019, facilitating joint research, visits of scientists and specialists and fellowships and internships for Uzbeks in premiere Indian scientific institutions.

Space Cooperation: The 1st meeting of the JWG on Space Cooperation (set up based on an Agreement signed in October 2018) was held in April 2019 through DVC. 37. **MSME:** The 3rd meeting of the JCM on MSME took place in Tashkent on 3 October 2011.

Civil Aviation: There are 6 weekly flights between Tashkent and Delhi in addition to 3 to Amritsar and 3 to Mumbai operated by Uzbekistan Airways. Uzbekistan has not been forthcoming in offering 5th freedom rights demanded by Indian operators to consider flying to Uzbekistan. In response to an Uzbek proposal for assistance with management of the Navoi Air Logistics centre, a team from GMR visited Navoi and Tashkent in early October 2019 to discuss terms of cooperation and potential involvement. Uzbek side is in talks with UAE on this issue. DPM Sardor Umurzakov during his meeting with CIM in April 2020 told that Uzbek and UAE side were ready to discuss participation by GMR. VC with Dy Minister of Transport along with officials of MFA (Eco Diplomacy division) and MIFT took place in May 2020. Response from Uzbek side about participation in Tashkent Airport and Task force for Air corridor is awaited. 39. **Solar Power:** Uzbekistan has expressed interest in joining the International Solar alliance. There is interest in Indian participation in development of solar power sector through competitive bidding.

Oil & Gas: Uzbekneftegaz and OVL are in talks for cooperation in oil & gas sector, including for allocation and exploration of specific blocks.

Civil Nuclear Energy: An Agreement on the long-term supply of Uranium ore concentrate was signed between Department of Atomic Energy and the Navoi Mining and Metallurgical Combine of Uzbekistan in January 2019. Uzbek side has expressed interest in information and experience sharing leading to a possible consultancy in the context of Uzbek-Russian cooperation to set up NPP in Uzbekistan.

JOINT BUSINESS COUNCIL AND CII OFFICE IN TASHKENT

The first meeting of the India-Uzbekistan Joint Business Council was held in Ahmedabad on 17 January 2019. The second meeting was held in October 2020 through virtual mode. It is led on the Indian side by CII

and on the Uzbek side by CCI. CII continues to pursue the matter of opening a representative office in Tashkent in partnership with CCI.

DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE AND LINE OF CREDIT (LOC)

In response to a request for LOC of USD 1 billion by the Uzbek Government, a Line of Credit Agreement for USD 200 million for construction of affordable housing and social infrastructure projects was signed between the State Investment Committee of Uzbekistan and the EXIM Bank in January 2019. India has also conveyed an offer for additional USD 800 million as Line of Credit/Buyers Credit to Uzbekistan. The Uzbek side had identified 4 projects under LOC so far and have signed an agreement to this effect.

A Joint Centre for Information Technology was set up in 2006 and upgraded in 2014 with Indian assistance. An India-Uzbekistan Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) was inaugurated on 24 December 2018 in Tashkent. An Indian expert has been deputed at EDC for training and capacity building of Uzbek entrepreneurs.

India has offered grant assistance for implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects to Uzbekistan.

EDUCATION AND CULTURE

Uzbekistan has been sending candidates under the ITEC programme since 1993. More than 2400 Uzbek professionals have undergone training under ITEC in premiere institutes in India so far. 164 slots were utilized in 2019 in regular and specialized courses.

As per the MoU between Gujarat Forensic Sciences University in Gandhinagar and Ministry of Innovation Development of Uzbekistan, various post-graduate courses are now open for admission to Uzbek students along with training of Uzbek officials in different forensic sciences. Uzbek students also avail of ICCR and Kendriya Hindi Sansthan scholarships. 20 scholarships under General scholarships for UG/PG/Research degrees and 5 under CEP have been allotted for 2019-20. There are also scholarships under AYUSH and short-term scholarships for Music and dance, in addition to two annual scholarships for one-year course in Hindi by CHS Agra. Regularly, Hindi and Urdu teachers are getting support of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture (LBSCIC) for attending refresher courses/participating in International Conferences/Vishwa Hindi Diwas. Indian faculty and scholars visit Uzbek institutions as guest lecturers and for research and conferences. The Samarkand State University has set up an Indian Study Centre, which is headed at present by a senior professor from India. Bukhara State University, Tashkent state University of Oriental Studies have also opened an India Room with IT instruments installed in it. The rooms will be equipped with books, musical instruments, dresses, artifacts with assistance of GOI, depicting various facets of Indian culture.

There is close affinity between the cultures of the two countries. Indian films, actors and songs are extremely popular across the country. There is interest in reviving the tradition of co-production and organization of and participation in film festivals. There is a growing trend among Indian film producing houses to use Uzbekistan as a location to shoot their films.

There are regular visits of cultural troupes from both sides. LBSCIC teaches Hindi, yoga, Kathak and table and holds cultural performances across Uzbekistan. Hindi is taught in several schools and universities in Tashkent. Mr. Khayriddin Sultanov, State Advisor to President and Mr. Ruslanbek Davletov, Justice Minister represented Uzbekistan at the concluding event, on 02 October 2018, of the week-long Mahatma Gandhi International 8 Sanitation Convention. Uzbek Government has released a postage stamp on Mahatma Gandhi to mark his 150th birth anniversary.

The Surajkund Crafts Mela entered into an MoU in September 2019 with Kokand International Handicrafts Exhibition for mutual participation and cooperation in each other's events.

In October 2020, the Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture (LBSCIC) run by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) completed its 25 years of establishment in Uzbekistan. The celebrations on the occasion were kicked off by holding a cultural programme at the LBSCIC attended by Her Excellency Ms. Kamola Akilova, Deputy Minister of Culture of Uzbekistan. On this occasion, a live congratulatory message through video conference was delivered by Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, President of ICCR in which he recalled the great contribution made by the LBSCIC in strengthening India-Uzbekistan cultural relations and imparting quality training in the fields of Indian classical dancing, yoga, table and the teaching of Hindi in Uzbekistan.

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There are about 1800 Indian nationals living in Uzbekistan, in Tashkent, Qarshi, Andijon, Ferghana, Urgench and Bukhara regions. The community hails from different parts of India and enjoys a positive image. They are involved mostly in pharmaceutical and hospitality businesses; some are university and school teachers; and many serve as doctors in local hospitals and many work in the oil and gas sector.


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