

India - Kazakhstan 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 flow of trade in goods and, more importantly, exchange of ideas and cultural influences. The flow 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 in November 2007 and Representative Office to Almaty.

The first PM 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.

President Nursultan Nazarbayev visited India in February 1992. Thereafter, he has 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 (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. He met President Nazarbayev on the margins of SCO summit in Qingdao, China on June 10, 2018. MOS [VKS] visited Kazakhstan on 14-15 December, 2014 to participate in the SCO heads of Government meeting held in Astana. MOS [MJA] visited Kazakhstan on 16-17 November, 2017.

Foreign Office Consultations (FOC) at the level of Deputy Foreign Ministers 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. External Affairs Minister Smt Sushma Swaraj paid an official visit to Kazakhstan on 2-3 August 2018. Dr. Satya Pal Singh, MoS, HRD visited Kazakhstan on October 15-18, 2018 to attend the 7th meeting of Ministers of Education of the SCO member states. Shri Jagat Prakash Nadda, Minister of Health and Family Welfare paid an official visit to Kazakhstan on 24-26 October, 2018 to attend the Second International Conference on Primary Health Care Towards Universal Health Coverage and Sustainable Development Goals held in Astana.

H.E. Mr. Askar Zhumagaliyev, Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan visited India on 20-22 September, 2018

India and Kazakhstan actively cooperate under the aegis of Multilateral Fora including CICA, SCO and the UN organizations. India has been a consistent supporter of Kazakhstan's initiative on Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (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.

Defence Cooperation

Defence cooperation is an essential pillar of our strategic partnership with Kazakhstan (bilateral relations enhanced to strategic partnership in 2009). 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 PM to Kazakhstan on 08 July 2015. The new agreement includes conduct of joint training, exercises, military-technical cooperation, UN peacekeeping and exchange of intelligence. Kazakh Armed Forces Unit underwent training on peacekeeping operations in India in April-May 2018 for deployment under the command of an Indian Battalion at UNIFIL, Lebanon, and an MOU in this regard was signed in Astana on 21 August 2018. The 5th JWG Meeting JWG on Defence Cooperation took place on May 31 and Jun 01, 2018 in Astana. Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, Raksha Mantri visited Kazakhstan on October 2-4, 2018.

Security

An MOU on Cooperation between National Security Councils of the two countries was signed in Feb 2012. First regular consultations between the National Security Secretariats were held in Astana on February 27-28, 2017. The delegation from India was led by Dr. Arvind Gupta, Deputy NSA and the Kazakh side was led by Mr Marat Shaikhutdinov, First Deputy Secretary of the Security Council.

Trade & Economy

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-Chair of the Commission. The last IGC meeting was held in Astana on Sep 19-20, 2017. Eight Joint Working Groups 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. It has been decided to set up two new Joint Working Groups on Transport & Connectivity and Health to take forward bilateral relations in the respective spheres.

Kazakhstan is India's largest trade and investment partner in Central Asia. As per statistics of Kazakhstan for 2017, total bilateral trade between India and Kazakhstan amounted to US\$ 981.8, out of which exports from Kazakhstan was to the tune of US\$ 757.14 million, and exports from India was US\$ 224.66 million. The second meeting of the JBC was held in New Delhi on February 16, 2018. The 6th JWG meeting on Trade and Economy took place in Astana on July 12, 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.

APEDA 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.

Science and Technology

Cooperation in this area with Kazakhstan has been an agenda item in our IGC meetings. However, not much concrete progress has been registered. The fourth meeting of the sub-committee on S&T took place in Astana on January 11-13, 2009 which discussed and finalized the Program of Cooperation between India and Kazakhstan for the period of 2009-11. A draft Programme of Cooperation for the duration 2016-2018 has been sent to Kazakh side for consideration.

Space Cooperation

An MoU on cooperation in the space sector was signed between ISRO and National Space Agency of Kazakhstan 2009. ISRO has given its proposals for construction of two communication and one radar satellite to Kazakh side and is waiting for response. During the PM's visit to Kazakhstan in July 2015, both sides agreed to enhance cooperation in the field of Space including its application for governance and development. Over 70 Kazakh specialists have been trained in Indian Space Institutes. ISRO launched "Al-Farabi-1", a 1.7 kg Technology Demonstrator Nano Satellite built by Al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty along with 103 other satellites on February 15, 2017.

A delegation from ISRO attended Kazakh Defence Expo 'KADEX' on 23-26 May 2018.

Civil Nuclear Cooperation

India and Kazakhstan signed an agreement in April 2009 for supply of 2,100 tonnes of Uranium to India up to 2014. An Agreement on Cooperation in the field of Peaceful Uses of Atomic Energy was signed during the visit of PM Manmohan Singh to Kazakhstan in April 2011. A New five year Purchase Agreement for purchase of 5000 tonnes of Uranium was signed during the visit of PM Narendra Modi to Astana on July 7-8, 2015. The supplies are being made regularly as per contract schedule. Kazakhstan supported India in obtaining India-specific exemption to allow civil nuclear cooperation with Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) countries in 2008. It also supported India's membership of NSG at the Plenary Session in Seoul in June 2016.

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 Astana 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 Govt. of India under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Resources Development in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs being provided in 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. A total of 52 ITEC slots were utilized in 2017-18. 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.

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 nationals which will be in force until 31 December 2018. This is applicable only to Indian passengers who travel on Kazakh airlines and are in transit to third countries through the international airports of Astana and Almaty.

With effect from July 1, 2018, Kazakhstan has removed the condition of registration of Indian nationals visiting the country. Further liberalization of visa for Indian nationals to increase trade and commerce and more inflow of tourists from India are under discussions.

Indian community

There are about 4500 NRIs/PIOs in Kazakhstan. Out of this, 3220 are Indian students, 900 construction workers and the rest are in various professional fields.

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