

India - Kazakhstan Relations

Relations between India and Kazakhstan are ancient and historical going back to more than 2500 years ago. 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. These deep rooted linkages are evident even today in similarities in food, language, dress and culture.

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 was opened 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 moved 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.

After Kazakhstan became independent in 1992, various high level visits have taken place in both directions. President Nursultan Nazarbayev has visited India five times (1992, 1993-transit, 1996, 2002, 2009). He was the Chief Guest at the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on January 26, 2009. A '*Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership*' was adopted during the visit. 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. Vice-Presidents of India Shri K.R. Narayanan and Shri Hamid Ansari visited Kazakhstan in 1996 and 2008 respectively. These high level visits laid a strong foundation for close and friendly relations between the two countries. The visit of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi to Kazakhstan in July 2015 served to further strengthen bilateral relations and expand strategic partnership between the two countries.

The India-Kazakhstan Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) established in 1993 has been the main institutional mechanism in developing bilateral trade, economic, scientific, technological, industrial and cultural cooperation. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on the Indian side and Ministry of Energy on the Kazakh side are the nodal agencies with respective Ministers as the Co-Chair of the Commission. The 12th IGC meeting was held in New Delhi in June 2015. Joint Working Groups have been established in the areas of Counter Terrorism, Trade & Economic Cooperation, Military & Military Technical Cooperation, Information Technology, Hydrocarbons and Textiles. It was decided to set up a new Joint Working Group on Connectivity during the 12th meeting of IGC in New Delhi.

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.

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 to convene Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and is actively participating in the process. Kazakhstan is supportive of India's permanent membership in an expanded UNSC and full membership of India in SCO. India supported Kazakhstan's successful candidature for non-permanent membership of UNSC in 2017-18 and Kazakhstan has assured its support for India's candidature for non-permanent seat in 2021-22. Kazakhstan strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and supports comprehensive convention on countering international terrorism.

Commercial relations

Kazakhstan is India's largest trade and investment partner in Central Asia. Bilateral trade amounted to US\$ 461 mln in 2015 and US\$ 618 mln in 2016 (*Source: Agency of Statistics, Kazakhstan*). Major products imported from Kazakhstan in 2016 were radio active isotopes (47.1%), petroleum oils and oils from bituminous minerals (43.72%) and asbestos (5.69%). Major products exported to Kazakhstan were pharmaceuticals and medical products (35%), tea (26%), raw tobacco (4%) and machinery & equipment (3%).

India's trade with Kazakhstan during last five years (In million US\$)

Year	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	Apr 2016-Feb 2017
Export	286.23	261.51	250.59	151.91	107.85
Import	139.99	656.33	701.67	352.93	300.11
Total Trade	426.22	917.84	952.26	504.84	407.96

Source: Ministry of Commerce, New Delhi

Cumulative investments from India into Kazakhstan and from Kazakhstan into India from 2005 -2016 amount to US\$ 244 mln and US\$ 83.09 mln respectively. Some of major Indian owned Companies include Arcelor Mittal (Iron & Steel, Coal), Kazstroyservice (EPC), SUN Group (Gold mining), KEC Ltd. (EPC in Power Transmission), Punjab National Bank (Banking), ONGC Videsh Limited (E&P in Hydrocarbon sector) and Gateway Ventures (manufacturing, supply and EPC). KazStroyService India Pvt. Ltd, a venture of KazStroyService in India was one of the main EPC contactors for the construction of Indian Oil's Paradip Refinery. An MoU for establishment of joint business council was signed between FICCI and Chamber of International Commerce during the visit of our Prime Minister to Kazakhstan on July 7-8, 2015. The first institutional meeting of the JBC was held in Astana on May 19, 2016.

The two countries closely collaborate in framework of INSTC as well as through

bilateral initiatives to improve surface connectivity.

An Agreement between ONGC Videsh Limited and KazMunaiGaz on the purchase of 25% stake in the Satpayev Oil Block in the Caspian Sea marked a new beginning in cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector. The two countries also signed a fresh contract for supply of natural uranium during the visit of Prime Minister of India to Kazakhstan in July 2015.

Cultural relations

India and Kazakhstan are both multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious secular states. They enjoy close cultural relations that manifest in popularity of yoga, Indian films, dance and music in Kazakhstan. Likewise the Kazakh folk music and dance are quite popular in India. Internationally renowned Kazakh violinist Marat Bisengaliev, supported the foundation of Symphony Orchestra of India in Mumbai in 2006.

During the visit of PM Modi on July 7-8, 2015, both countries extended support for organizing cultural events in each other's countries and expressed interest to consider exchange of reciprocal Cultural Festivals. Consequently, Festival of India was organized in Kazakhstan from October 06-12, 2016.

Indian Cultural Centre in Astana is engaged in various cultural activities, including conducting of yoga and dance classes; celebration of Indian festivals; organizing of cultural performances; screening of Indian films and documentaries; organizing performances by visiting Indian cultural troupes in Kazakhstan and Kazakh cultural troupes in India; disbursement of ICCR scholarships; and organizing visits under Academic Visitors Programme.

India provides scholarships in various disciplines under the ICCR Scholarship programmes for students from Kazakhstan. Since 1992, more than 200 students have availed ICCR scholarships.

In December 2015, an ICCR alumna Ms. Akmaral Kainazarova, Director, Centre for Indian Classical Dances in Almaty was awarded the title of "Honoured Worker (Artist) of the Republic of Kazakhstan". Another ICCR alumna, Dr. Laura Yerekeshava, was awarded ICCR Distinguished Alumni Award in March 2016.

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 31 ITEC slots were utilized in 2016-17.

India established a Centre of Excellence in the field of Information and Communication Technology at Eurasia National University in July 2015. About 1500 students and professionals have benefitted from the Centre since its establishment.

Visa

India and Kazakhstan have an agreement on visa free entry for Diplomatic and Official Passport holders. Ordinary passport holders require visa. In case of Kazakhstan citizens, visas are issued at the Embassy of India in Astana and Representative Office of India in Almaty, usually within 72 hours of submission of application.

In the case of Indian citizens, the local sponsor is required to obtain visa clearance from Ministry of Internal Affairs. Thereafter, the applicant submits visa application along with visa clearance number to the Embassy of Kazakhstan in New Delhi for issue of visa. The entire process takes about 2 weeks. Indian citizens visiting Kazakhstan and intending to stay for more than five days are required to get themselves registered with local migration police within five calendar days of their arrival in the country, every time they visit Kazakhstan. A failure to do so may attract penalty/detention.

Indian community

There are about 6250 NRIs/PIOs in Kazakhstan. This includes about 2400 Indian students studying in medical universities in Astana, Aktobe, Almaty, Karaganda and Semey and about 2500 construction workers working at Abu Dhabi plaza, Astana, which is under construction. The rest are advisers, entrepreneurs, executives, teachers and professionals working in Indian companies, multinationals, government organizations, private sector, trading companies, schools and universities and their families.

June 04, 2017, Astana
