

Ambassador's Interview to TV Channel "Asyl Arna"

TV Channel "Asyl Arna" telecast an interview of Ambassador Shri Harsh Jain on 30th December, 2016.

Q. Dear Mr. Ambassador! Thank you for agreeing to give an interview to us! How do you appraise the relations between India and Kazakhstan?

A. I would highly appraise close and friendly relations between India and Kazakhstan. These relations are based on shared values and deep-rooted historical and cultural linkages. Both our countries are multi-ethnic, multi religious, multi linguistic societies committed to following secular policies. The bilateral relations have been growing steadily ever since the independence of Kazakhstan in 1991. India was one of the first few countries to recognize the independence of Kazakhstan and establish diplomatic relations. On an average, there is a high-level visit between the two countries every 2-3 years. These visits have helped in shaping the direction of bilateral relations and further deepening and strengthening mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.

An important milestone in the relations was the adoption of strategic partnership between the two countries in January 2009 during the visit of President Nazarbayev to India as the Chief Guest on the occasion of the 60th Republic Day of India. The strategic partnership opened new areas of bilateral cooperation such as hydrocarbon sector and cooperation in the field of space and civil nuclear energy. The visit of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Kazakhstan last year further strengthened this partnership. In the last 25 years, we have established close cooperation in many fields. It includes political consultations on bilateral, regional and international issues of mutual interest, cooperation in multilateral forums, trade and economic cooperation, cooperation in the fields of defence, education, culture and development partnership.

Views of both our countries coincide on all major regional and international issues. India supported Kazakhstan's candidature for the non-permanent membership of UN Security Council in 2017-18 and Kazakhstan supports India's claim for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. India also supports Kazakhstan's CICA and non-proliferation initiatives and actively participates in the Congress of World and Traditional Religions. One of the first major investments in Kazakhstan came from Indian businessman Mr. L. N. Mittal. Today, Kazakhstan is India's largest trade and investment partner in Central Asia. In my view, the relations between the two countries have a great future.

Q. Which spheres do you think require further development?

A. Our bilateral relations are dynamic in character. There is a significant transformation taking place in both countries. India has grown rapidly in the last 25 years becoming the third largest economy in the world by purchasing power parity. India has initiated major economic reforms in the last two years making it the most open economy for Foreign Direct Investment and the fastest growing large economy in the world. India has also made significant progress in scientific and technological fields. India has a prominent voice in global affairs and international forums.

Kazakhstan too has grown rapidly in the last 25 years and has taken initiatives that have enhanced its regional and international prestige. There is, therefore, a vast scope for us to deepen and widen our relations in all spheres of bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Our economies are mutually complementary. We are both a strong voice for peace, tolerance and stability in the world. Kazakhstan is rich in natural resources. India, on the other hand, is one of the largest importers of hydrocarbons and minerals. It has a well-developed manufacturing sector and service industry. There is thus an enormous potential for expanding cooperation in energy security, mineral resources, agriculture, textiles, trade, tourism, IT, entertainment and service industries, defence, education and cultural fields. Indian companies can assist Kazakhstan in building infrastructure under its Nurly Zhol programme. We also need to work together to build efficient transport connectivity between the two countries.

Q. How would you appraise the social and economic development of today's Kazakhstan?

A. In my view, Kazakhstan has made an incredible socio-economic progress in the last 25 years. Kazakhstan's GDP has increased 16 fold since independence. The average income of people in Kazakhstan has also increased manifold. Kazakhstan has made rapid progress in education and health sectors. This is all very impressive. Moreover, the investments Kazakhstan is making in the human resources and physical infrastructure will pay the country greatly in future. It has built a world-class capital city Astana which every Kazakhstani citizen can be proud of.

Q. Which spheres of Indian economy are important for Kazakhstani business?

A. India is a rapidly growing economy and a huge market. Kazakhstan can take advantage of our geographic proximity and excellent political relations to tap into this market by building strategic partnerships in areas where it has the competitive strength, such as hydrocarbons and mineral resources, agriculture, tourism and investments in Indian economy.

Q. Which spheres of prospective relations with Kazakhstan require further expansion?

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Q. Which spheres of prospective relations with Kazakhstan require further expansion?

A. In my view, Indian vector in Kazakhstan's multi-vector foreign policy needs strengthening. Kazakhstan can greatly benefit by expanding this vector. Both our countries have similarities in foreign policy and views on international issues. We share the same extended neighbourhood that affects peace, security and stability in our region. As I said earlier, our economies complement each other but in India, the economy is largely driven by the private sector. There are great cultural affinities between our two countries. I therefore consider that further expansion of our political and security cooperation, people to people contacts, trade and investment cooperation by developing close relations between the businessmen in India and Kazakhstan, better transport connectivity, more intense cultural and academic exchanges, further expansion in defense and education cooperation, would greatly benefit both countries.

Q. Dear Mr. Ambassador, thank you for your answers. In conclusion, I have a question about your growth in diplomatic career?

A. Well, I have had a very satisfying diplomatic career which began 23 years ago. My first substantive assignment was to Moscow, where I began as third Secretary and was promoted to Second Secretary. I then went to Kiev, Capital of Ukraine, where I spent two years. My responsibility was trade and economic relations, development partnership and cooperation in the field of science and technology between the two countries. I then moved to St. Petersburg in Russia as First Secretary responsible for Consular and Commercial matters. I spent three years in St. Petersburg before returning to Delhi. In Delhi, I was responsible for putting in place massive reconstruction assistance that India is providing to Afghanistan since the end of 2001. It was one of the most satisfying assignments in my diplomatic career. I was promoted and sent to India's High Commission in London where I served as Political Counselor for multilateral relations.

I then moved to India's embassy in Kathmandu, Capital of Nepal. I was responsible for entire range of trade, economic and commercial relations between the two countries. Thereafter, I returned to India and was made in-charge of global cyber issues in the Ministry of External Affairs. I served as India's Representative in the United Nations Group of Governmental Experts on the developments in the field of information and telecommunications in the context of international security. I received further promotion during this period and was appointed Ambassador to Kazakhstan.

Q. This year Kazakhstan celebrates 25th anniversary of independence. What are your wishes to people of Kazakhstan?

A. I, on behalf of the people of India and on my own behalf, congratulate the people of Kazakhstan on the 25th anniversary of its Independence. It is an occasion to celebrate all the great achievements and progress made by Kazakhstan during the last 25 years. Our bilateral relations and eternal friendship has also flourished during this period and achieved many milestones. I wish people of Kazakhstan peace, prosperity and well-being on this occasion.

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