

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 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 22, 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.

The first PM of India Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru accompanied by daughter Indira Gandhi visited Almaty in 1955. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan visited Kazakhstan in 1956 in his capacity as Vice President.

The first 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. India and Kazakhstan bilateral relations were enhanced to **strategic partnership** during this visit.

Prime Minister of India Shri PV Narsimha Rao visited Kazakhstan in 1993 and Prime Ministers 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. 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. 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, MOS, Ministry of Human Resource Development visited Kazakhstan to attend the 7th Meeting of Education Ministers of SCO Member States held on 15-18 October, 2018 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, 2018 in Nur-Sur-Sultan. Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha Shri Harivansh Narayan Singh visited Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan to attend the 4th meeting of Speakers of the Eurasian Countries' Parliaments on 23-24 September, 2019. MOS for External Affairs and MOS for Parliamentary Affairs Shri V Muraleedharan visited Kazakhstan to attend the Astana club meeting held in Nur-Sultan on 11-12 November, 2019.

EAM visited Kazakhstan on 11-12 October 2021 and participated in the 6th Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA). He called on President Tokayev and conveyed greetings from PM Modi and his invitation to visit India in 2022. He discussed bilateral relations and conveyed India's proposal on the mutual recognition of Covid vaccination certificates.

On 10 Sept.2020, External Affairs Minister of India Dr. S. Jaishankar met his Kazakh counterpart Foreign Minister Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi on the sidelines the SCO Meeting of Foreign Ministers in Moscow. On 30 March 2021, External Affairs Minister met H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan at the 9th Ministerial Conference of Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process (HoA-IP) on Afghanistan in Dushanbe during his visit to Tajikistan. EAM held bilateral meeting with H.E Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Dy Prime Minister- Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan in the sidelines of International conference "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity, Challenges and Opportunities" during his visit to Tashkent, Uzbekistan on 15-16 July 2021. EAM participated in the 20th meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) chaired by Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin via videoconference on November 25, 2021.

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 (7th round of FOC) was held in Nov. 2020 through DVC [Digital Video Conference].

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 had 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.

Kazakhstan is also part of the India-Central Asia Dialogue, the first meeting of which was held in Samarkhand on 12-13th January 2019. The 1st India-Central Asia Business Council Meeting, under this dialogue was organized by FICCI, on 6 February, 2020 in New Delhi. On 28 Oct.2020 the 2nd India-Central Asia Dialogue was held in digital video conference format. From Indian side the delegation was led by Dr. S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister in the event, from Kazakh side the delegation was led by H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan in the dialogue. The 2nd India-Central Asia Business Council meeting was held on 28 October 2020 through video conference organized by FICCI.

On 28 Oct.2020, the 19th meeting of Ministers of External Trade and Economy of the SCO member States was held in virtual format. From Indian side the delegation was led by Shri Piyush Goyal, Minister for Commerce and Industry and from Kazakh side the delegation was led by Mr. Ruslan Dalenov, Minister of National Economy of Kazakhstan.

The 19th Summit of SCO Council of Heads of Government was held on 30 November 2020 in video-conference format in which Vice President of India Shri Venkaiah Naidu Chaired the meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government hosted by India and the Kazakh delegation was led by Mr. Askar Mamin, Prime Minister of Kazakhstan .

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 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.

Kazakhstan's National Security Committee Chairman Karim Massimov, who was also former PM of Kazakhstan visited India and participated in the Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan on November 10, 2021. He met PM Modi along with NSAs and Security Council Chiefs of other countries.

Deputy PM and Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tileuberdi participated in the 3rd Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the India-Central Asia Dialogue in New Delhi on 18-19 December 2021. He also held bilateral talks with EAM. They discussed bilateral and regional issues to further deepen the bilateral strategic partnership and the upcoming highest level visit. They discussed the situation in Afghanistan. He, along with Central Asian FMs, met PM Modi on 20 December. Same day PM Modi tweeted that they discussed ways to further strengthen India's close partnership with Central Asia and also exchanged views on developments in the region.

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 Trade and Integration on the Kazakh side have been the nodal ministries with respective Ministers as the Co-Chair of the Commission. Recently the Kazakh side has changed the nodal ministry from Ministry of Energy to Ministry of Trade and Integration. 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 was decided to set up two new Joint Working Groups on Transport & Connectivity and Health to take forward bilateral relations in the respective spheres. The 1st meeting of India-Kazakhstan JWG on connectivity, transport and logistics was held on 26-27 November, 2019 in New Delhi.

Kazakhstan is India's largest trade and investment partner in Central Asia. As per statistics of Kazakhstan for 2019, total bilateral trade between India and Kazakhstan amounted to US\$ 1.86 bin, out of which exports from Kazakhstan was to the tune of US\$ 1572.6 million, and exports from India was US\$ 291.6 million. During Jan-Dec. 2020, bilateral trade is US\$ 2.37 bln and during the same period exports from Kazakhstan to India is US\$ 1.99 bln and exports from India is US\$ 382.9 mln. The 6th JWG meeting on Trade and Economy took place in Astana on July 12, 2018. On 10 Sept. 2020, the 7th Session of India-Kazakhstan JWG on Trade and Economic Cooperation was held through Video Conference.

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 February 16, 2018.

APEDA, the organization promoting Indian agro-products sent a delegation to Almaty and Astana in June 2018 that conducted wet sampling of different varieties of Indian mangoes in prominent stores of Kazakhstan. Similarly, a Tea delegation visited Almaty in August 2018 and conducted tea promotion events and held B2B meetings. EEPC 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. 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 is 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. 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. Because of its success, the programme was repeated in 2019. Similar programme was organized for 2019-20. Recently Kazakhstan has been included in the high impact community development projects under Central Asia Dialogue.

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, Akatu, 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. Due to COVID-19, for time being the 72 hour visa-regime has been suspended by the Kazakh Govt. 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.

In April 2020, Government of India provided 30000 tablets of Hydroxychloroquin as humanitarian assistance to Kazakhstan for its fight against COVID-19.

In May 2021, in view of the sharp deterioration of the epidemiological situation in India around 40 tonnes of air cargo (6 150 000 medical masks, 400,000 respirators, 50,000 anti-plague suits, and 105 portable artificial lung ventilation devices made in Kazakhstan) was sent to India by the Govt. of Kazakhstan as humanitarian aid to combat the COVID-19.

Indian community

The size of the Indian community is about 7,800 in Kazakhstan. Out of this, about 5,300 are Indian students, about 1000 are construction workers and the rest are in various professional fields.

Several special evacuation flights operated by Air India under the VBM and charter flights evacuated 3,745 Indian nationals from Kazakhstan to India in 2021. The evacuated Indian nationals included medical students, tourists, professionals and workers.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Nur-Sultan Website: <http://www.indembastana.gov.in/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/IndiaInKazakhstan/>

Embassy of India, Nur-Sultan Twitter account: @indembastana