

## **Ambassador's Interview to All India Radio on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2017**

Ambassador Shri Harsh Jain gave an interview to All India Radio on 7<sup>th</sup> June, 2017, which was broadcast in its news bulletin in the morning of 8<sup>th</sup> June, 2017 on the eve of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's visit to Kazakhstan. The text of the interview is given below:

### **1. What is the significance of Prime Minister's visit to Astana?**

The Prime Minister is visiting Kazakhstan to attend the 17<sup>th</sup> SCO Summit in Astana and participate in the opening ceremony of the Astana EXPO. India had applied for the membership of SCO as a full-fledged member. The process for an aspirant country to become a member was indicated by SCO last year and formalized in the form of Memorandum of Obligations. From our side, we have completed all the necessary steps specified in the Memorandum. It is expected that the SCO Summit in Astana on 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2017 would confirm the completion of the process and admit India as a member.

In addition to the SCO related programme, Prime Minister would be attending the opening ceremony of the Specialized International Exhibition Astana EXPO, which is being held in Kazakhstan this year. India is one of the 115 countries participating in the EXPO. He would also attend a concert at Astana Opera in the evening of 8<sup>th</sup> June. An Indian cultural troupe is participating in the concert.

In addition to these events, there will also be bilateral meetings, given the opportunity and the presence of several world leaders participating in the SCO Summit and Astana EXPO.

### **2. How is bilateral cooperation between India and Kazakhstan getting strengthened after Prime Minister's last visit in 2015?**

There has been a significant deepening and widening of bilateral relations since the last visit of our Prime Minister to Astana two years ago. There were several important decisions taken and agreements signed during the visit. We have successfully implemented most of these decisions and agreements and the rest are under implementation.

As an example, India has already received two shipments of Uranium from Kazakhstan. The Centre of Excellence in Information and Communication Technology inaugurated by our Prime Minister at Eurasian National University in Astana two years ago has benefited more than 1500 students, scholars and scientists. The exploration work at the Satpayev offshore block in the Caspian Sea by OVL Joint Venture in Kazakhstan is progressing well.

Our Defence and Security cooperation has intensified and widened during the last two years. We had the first joint military exercise last year. Our National Security Council Secretariats had the first security dialogue in February this year.

There is also intensification in trade and economic relations. Both Indian and Kazakh companies are taking a more active interest in each other's country. Several Indian business delegations have visited Kazakhstan in the last two years and vice versa.

In the last two years, Indian companies have made investments worth US\$ 40 million in Kazakhstan and Kazakh companies have invested US\$ 18 million in India. The number of Indian companies working in Kazakhstan has also gone up from about 190 two years ago to

about 260 now.

Four Indian companies are currently looking at investment opportunities in Kazakhstan and two Kazakh companies are looking at investments in India. There are some Indian companies looking at the possibility of tie-ups with Kazakh companies in defence manufacturing, which will promote “Make in India” in the defence sector.

In the cultural sphere too, our relations have greatly intensified and the utilisation of ITEC programme for capacity building in Kazakhstan has greatly improved.

**3. Are any bilateral agreements set to be signed between India and Kazakhstan during Prime Minister’s visit?**

Since the visit is in a multilateral context, there are no bilateral agreements envisaged to be signed during the visit.

**4. What is the trade volume between India and Kazakhstan at present?**

According to the Kazakhstan trade statistics, our bilateral trade amounted to US\$ 618 million in 2016, which is an increase of 34% over our bilateral trade in 2015. The main products exported to Kazakhstan are pharmaceuticals (35%), tea (26%), raw tobacco (4%) and machinery & equipment (3%) and the main products imported from Kazakhstan are Uranium, petroleum and asbestos.

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