

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 between both the countries. 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 visited in June 2002 and Dr. Manmohan Singh visited in April 2011. 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. In July 2015, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Kazakhstan. The visit 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-Chairs. 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. A new Joint Working Group on Connectivity was established during the 12th meeting of IGC in New Delhi. 4th meeting of the India-Kazakhstan Joint Working Group on Trade & Economic Cooperation was held in Astana in November 2015.

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 of UNSC and full membership of SCO. India supported Kazakhstan's candidature for non-permanent membership of UNSC for 2017-18 and Kazakhstan has extended its support for India's candidature for non-permanent seat in 2021-22. Kazakhstan won election for non-permanent membership in June, 2016. Kazakhstan strongly condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and supports comprehensive convention on countering international terrorism.

Commercial relations

Kazakhstan is India largest trading partner in Central Asia. Bilateral trade during April-Dec 2015 stood at US\$ 412.39 million. The exports from India to Kazakhstan during this period amounted to US\$ 113.16 million and exports from Kazakhstan to India were US\$ 299.23 million. Major products exported to Kazakhstan are pharmaceuticals and medical products, tea, machinery & equipment and raw tobacco. Major products imported by India are oil, uranium, asbestos and titanium.

Trade Figures during the last five years (In million US\$)

Year	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16
Export	244.39	286.23	261.51	250.59	151.91
Import	191.86	139.99	656.33	701.67	352.93
Total Trade	436.25	426.22	917.84	952.26	504.84

Source: Ministry of Commerce, New Delhi

According to Kazakh statistics, total foreign investment in Kazakhstan from India till 2015 is USD 291 million. Indian investments are in areas such as oil and gas, banking, engineering, restaurants, tea packaging, pharmaceutical trading, mining, steel, travel agency, general trading and services. Arcelor Mittal, Kazstroyservice, SUN Group, KEC Ltd., Punjab National Bank, ONGC Videsh Limited and Gateway Ventures are among the major Indian owned companies/PSUs operating in Kazakhstan. The total investment of Kazakh companies in India is USD 35.1 million till 2015. Kazakh investments are mainly in oil and gas sector and engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) companies in India. An MoU for establishment of joint business council was signed between FICCI and Chamber of International Commerce during the visit of Prime Minister of India to Kazakhstan on July 7-8, 2015.

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 2006.

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 trains specialists and scholars from Kazakhstan in various fields under ITEC program sponsored by Ministry of External Affairs and under the ICCR Scholarship programmes for international students. Since 1992, more than 1000 specialists have undergone training under ITEC programme and more than 200 students have studied in India under ICCR programme. Currently 35 ITEC slots and 15 ICCR scholarships are offered to Kazakhstan annually. In December 2015, an ICCR alumna Ms Akmaral Kainazarova, Director, Centre for Indian Classical Dances was awarded the title of “Honoured Worker (Artist) of the Republic of Kazakhstan”.

The regular contacts between academic and strategic communities has played a significant role in strengthening cooperation between India and Kazakhstan. The academic and educational institutions in both countries are maintaining active exchanges.

India and Kazakhstan have an agreement on visa free entry for Diplomatic and Official Passport holders. Ordinary passport holders require visa, which has to be applied for in advance by the local sponsors for obtaining visa clearance from Consular Department of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The visa is issued at Embassy in New Delhi usually within one week from the date of receipt of clearance. 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 4500 NRIs/PIOs in Kazakhstan. Most of them are in the private sector (oil exploration, downstream industries, steel and IT) and business (tea, pharmaceuticals etc.) There are about 1700 Indian students studying in medical universities in Aktobe, Almaty, Karaganda and Semey and about 2000 construction workers working at Abu Dhabi plaza, Astana, which is under construction.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Astana website: <http://indembastana.in/>

Embassy of India, Astana Facebook: www.facebook.com/EmbassyOfIndiaKazakhstan
Embassy of India, Astana Twitter account: @indembastana
Embassy of India Newsletter: http://indembastana.in/news_letter_detail.php?year=2015

July 2016