

## India - Kazakhstan Bilateral 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 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.

India and Kazakhstan are strategic partners since 2009.

The first Prime Minister 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.

The first President Nursultan Nazarbayev visited India in February 1992. Thereafter, he 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. 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 (bilateral visit) and June 2017 [Shanghai Cooperation Organization (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 17<sup>th</sup> SCO Summit in Astana on June 8-9, 2017. India was admitted as a full member of the SCO during the Summit. Gen V.K. Singh (Retd), Minister of State for Ministry of External Affairs visited Kazakhstan on 14-15 December, 2014 to participate in the SCO heads of Government meeting held in Astana. Shri M.J. Akbar, Minister of State for Ministry of External Affairs 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, Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Resource Development visited Kazakhstan to attend the 7th Meeting of Education Ministers of SCO Member States held on 15-18 October, 2019 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, 2019 in Nur-Sur-Sultan. Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha Shri Hari Vansh visited Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan to attend the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of Speakers of the Eurasian Countries' Parliaments on 22-25 September, 2019. Shri V Muraleedharan, Minister of State for External Affairs and Minister of State for Parliamentary Affairs visited Kazakhstan to attend the Astana club meeting held in Nur-Sultan on 11-12 November, 2019.

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 2019 held in New Delhi. Mr. Ilyin Yuri Viktorovich, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan visited India to attend the 10<sup>th</sup> 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.

India and Kazakhstan actively cooperate under the aegis of multilateral fora including CICA (Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia), SCO and the UN organizations. India has been a consistent supporter of Kazakhstan's initiative on CICA and is actively participating in the process. Kazakhstan supports India's permanent membership in an expanded UNSC and has 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.

### **Institutional Mechanisms**

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 (6<sup>th</sup> FOC) was held in Astana in March 2015.

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 Energy on the Kazakh side are the nodal ministries with

respective Ministers as the co-chairs of the Commission. The last IGC meeting was held in Astana on Sep 19-20, 2017. Several Joint Working Groups (JWGs) 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, Health and Transport, Connectivity & Logistics to take forward bilateral relations in the respective spheres. The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of India-Kazakhstan JWG on connectivity, transport and logistics was recently held on 26 November 2019 in New Delhi.

## **Defence Cooperation**

The Indo-Kazakh Defence Cooperation is carried out under the framework of an agreement on 'Defence and Military Technical cooperation' signed in July 2015 during the visit of Hon'ble Prime Minister to Kazakhstan on 8 July 2015. The agreement includes various areas including conduct of joint training, exercises, military-technical cooperation, UN peacekeeping. Kazakh Armed Forces Unit underwent training on peacekeeping operations in India in April-May 2018 for deployment under an Indian Battalion at the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, then Raksha Mantri visited Kazakhstan on 2-4 October, 2018 to flag off the first rotation of the Kazakh contingent jointly deployed with the Indian Battalion in UNIFIL, the historic first in the annals of UN Peacekeeping.

## **Trade & Economy**

Kazakhstan is India's largest trade and investment partner in Central Asia. As per statistics of Kazakhstan for 2019 [from January to November], total bilateral trade between India and Kazakhstan amounted to US\$ 1.56 billion, out of which exports from Kazakhstan was to the tune of US\$ 1299.1 million, and exports from India was US\$ 267.9 million. The 6th JWG meeting on Trade and Economy took place in Astana on 12 July 2018.

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 16 February 2018.

APEDA (The Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority), responsible for promoting Indian agro-products, visited Almaty and Astana in June 2018 and conducted wet sampling of different varieties of Indian mangoes in prominent stores of Kazakhstan. This was received with great enthusiasm by the people of Kazakhstan. Similarly, a Tea delegation visited Almaty in August 2018 and conducted tea promotion events and held

B2B meetings. EEPC India (Engineering Export Promotion Council of 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; celebration of Indian festivals. 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 Government of India under the aegis of the Ministry of Human Resources Development in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs being provided in the 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. Similar programme was organized for 2019-20.

## **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. 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 1<sup>st</sup> January 2019.

## **Indian community**

The size of the Indian community is about 7,800 in Kazakhstan. Out of this, about 5,300 are Indian students, about 2,280 are construction workers and the rest are in various professional fields.

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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