

## **Brief on India-Uzbekistan Bilateral Relations**

India and Uzbekistan have relations that go back in history. India was one of the first countries to recognize the state sovereignty of Uzbekistan after the latter's independence. The protocol on establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Uzbekistan was signed in Tashkent on 18 March 1992. In recent years, there has been significant intensification in bilateral ties, mainly due to the visits of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in July 2015 and June 2016 to Tashkent; the reforms ushered in Uzbekistan by President Shavkat Mirziyoyev; and President Mirziyoyev's visit to India in October 2018 and in January 2019. A Virtual Summit between PM and President Mirziyoyev was held in December 2020. A virtual India-Central Asia Summit was held on January 2022. PM attended a meeting of Head of States of SCO in Samarkand in September 2022. President Mirziyoyev attended virtual meeting of Head of States of SCO in July 2023. Bilateral relations now encompass a wider canvas, including on political and strategic issues, defence and security, trade and investment, energy, agriculture, S&T, education and people-to-people ties.

### **High Level visits/meetings**

2. **Visit of PM:** PM Shri Narendra Modi visited Uzbekistan on July 6-7, 2015, during which he held bilateral talks with the then President Islam Karimov on advancing our strategic partnership. An Agreement on cooperation in the field of Tourism; a Protocol on cooperation between the Foreign Ministries; and a Programme of Cultural Cooperation for year 2015-2017 was signed during the visit. PM also visited Uzbekistan in June 2016 as part of the meeting of the Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).
3. **Visit of President of Uzbekistan:** President Shavkat Mirziyoyev visited India from 30 September-1 October 2018. During the visit, 17 Agreements/MoUs were signed, including in areas of S&T cooperation, agriculture, tourism, military education, justice, health and medical science, pharmaceuticals, space, and other areas.
4. President Mirziyoyev participated in the Vibrant Gujarat Summit as Guest of Honour in January 2019.
5. **PM- President Virtual Summit:** A Virtual Summit between PM Shri Narendra Modi and President Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev was held on 11 December 2020. Both sides discussed bilateral issues including in the fields of politics, development cooperation, security, space, education, development projects and regional issues including Afghanistan.
6. **India-Central Asia Summit:** At the initiative of the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, the Presidents of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan attended the first India-Central Asia Summit on 27 January 2022 in virtual format. The Leaders welcomed the signing of MoUs for implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects (HICDPs) for socio-economic development in Central Asian countries, based on grant assistance by India. The Leaders paid special attention to the need to establish cooperation between specialized national institutions, including in the fields of finance, renewable energy, information, digital and other advanced technologies. The Leaders of

Central Asian countries expressed their gratitude to the Prime Minister of India for the successful organization of the first India-Central Asia Summit. The Leaders agreed to hold the next meeting of the India-Central Asia Summit in 2024.

7. **22nd Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO):** Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Uzbekistan, at the invitation of the President of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, to attend the 22nd Meeting of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on 15-16 September 2022. On 16 September, Prime Minister participated in the SCO Summit and held bilateral meeting with the President Mirziyoyev. The two leaders touched upon priority areas of bilateral cooperation, particularly trade, economic cooperation and connectivity.

8. **Visits of EAM/MOS/ Uzbek FM:** In January 2019, EAM Smt. Sushama Swaraj visited Uzbekistan for the first India-Central Asia Dialogue at the Ministerial level held in Samarkand. Uzbek FM Abdulaziz Kamilov presented key-note address at the Raisina Dialogue in January 2020 in New Delhi. He met EAM and PM during the visit. FM Mr. Kamilov met EAM again in Moscow in September 2020 on the sidelines of the SCO FM meeting, in New Delhi on 25 February 2021 and in Dushanbe on the sidelines of the 'Heart of Asia- Istanbul Process' Conference on 30 March 2021. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and FM Mr. Kamilov met in Dushanbe on the sidelines of the SCO FM meeting on 14 July 2021. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar participated in the 'Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity: Challenges and Opportunities' international conference organised by the Uzbek Side in Tashkent on 15-16 July 2021. He also called on President Shavkat Mirziyoyev during the visit. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar and FM Mr. Kamilov discussed bilateral and regional issues of mutual interest including situation in Afghanistan during SCO Summit in Dushanbe on 15-16 September 2021. MOS Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi visited Uzbekistan from 23-26 September 2021. She met FM Kamilov, Minister of Culture Ozodbek Nazarbekov and spoke at Tashkent State University of Law, Bukhara State University and interacted with Indologists from Uzbekistan, the Indian diaspora in Tashkent and the Indian students at Samarkand State Medical Institute. Cultural Exchange Programme for 2021-25 was also signed during her visit. Mr. Laziz Kudratov, First Deputy Minister, Ministry of Investments and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan visited India on 21 to 23 December 2021 and met with representatives of Indian ministries, departments and companies. Hon. Minister of State for Culture and Parliamentary Affairs Shri Arjun Ram Meghwal visited Uzbekistan from 19 to 22 May 2022. During his visit, MoS attended the 19th Meeting of Ministers of Culture of the Member States of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

9. **30th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations of India & Uzbekistan:** Hon'ble President Shri Ram Nath Kovind sent a congratulatory message to President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev on the occasion. On 18 March, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov and EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar also exchanged congratulatory messages on the occasion (18 March 1992 was the date of establishment of diplomatic relations).

10. The delegation headed by the Deputy FM of Uzbekistan Mr. Furkat Sidikov met with MoS for External Affairs and Culture, Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi, as part of a visit to Delhi on 14 July 2022.

11. EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Uzbekistan to attend the SCO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Tashkent on 28-30 July 2022. EAM also called on President of Uzbekistan Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev along with other Foreign Ministers on 29 July.

12. Hon'ble Minister of State for Home Shri Nityanand Rai visited Uzbekistan to attend Meeting of Ministers of Internal Affairs and Public Security of the SCO Member States in Tashkent on 17-19 August 2022.

13. Deputy NSA Shri Vikram Misri visited Uzbekistan to participate in SCO NSAs meeting in Tashkent on 18-19 August 2022.

14. Mr. Adhkam Ikramov, Minister of Sports and Youth Policy of Uzbekistan visited India between 27-30 January 2023. During his visit Mr. Ikramov met with Shri Anurag Thakur, Hon'ble Minister of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India on 28th January. They discussed various issues of mutual interest and India's various initiatives in sports for youth including Fit India movement.

15. Foreign Minister Bakhtiyor Saidov visited Goa on 4-5 May 2023 for the SCO Foreign Ministers Meeting where he also met EAM Dr. Jaishankar on the sidelines.

16. Dr. L. Murugan, Hon'ble Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting visited Tashkent between 29 September to 02 October 2023 to participate in Tashkent International Film Festival (TIFF). He met with Mr. Ozodbek Nazarbekov, Cultural Minister of Uzbekistan, Dr. B. Mumcu, Turkish Deputy Minister of Culture and Tourism and Mr. Firdavs Abdukhalikov, Director of Uzbek Film on the margins of the TIFF.

### **Regional Exchanges**

17. **State/Region Agreements:** Agreements on establishment of cooperation between Andijan region and the State of Gujarat and between the cities of Samarkand and Agra were signed during the visit of Uzbek President in October 2018. Proposals for a similar agreement between Haryana and Fergana is also under consideration.

18. **Visit of CM Gujarat:** Chief Minister of Gujarat Shri Vijay Rupani led a 47-member delegation from Gujarat to Uzbekistan from 20-23 October 2019. The delegation attended the International Investment Forum "Open Andijan" in Andijan and visited Samarkand, Bukhara and Tashkent. Apart from meetings with the Governors of these regions and B2B Forums between Indian and Uzbek businessmen, the CM also met with President Mirziyoyev and DPM Ganiev. Chairman of Uzbek Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mr. A. Ikramov and Minister of Innovation Development, Ibrokhim Abdurakhmonov visited India from 28-30 November 2019 as a follow-up of the visit of Gujarat CM. Altogether, 45 agreements have been signed and 59 projects worth USD 992 million in different areas, including agriculture and agro-processing, chemicals and petrochemicals, textiles, pharma and healthcare, IT and innovation, energy, mining, and jewellery are being pursued. Both sides have also agreed to monitor and implement these projects through nodal points of contacts and regular follow up visits.

## **Parliamentary Exchanges**

19. The last visit by Speaker of Oliy Majlis (Lower House of Uzbek Parliament) took place in November 2005. Vice-President Shri Hamid Ansari led a parliamentary delegation to Uzbekistan in May 2013. An invitation to Lok Sabha Speaker from his Uzbek counterpart has been accepted.

## **Bilateral and multilateral Mechanisms**

20. **National Coordination Committees:** India and Uzbekistan have set up National Coordination Committees to oversee the implementation of mutually agreed projects and initiatives. The Committee is led by MOS(VM) on the Indian side and comprises senior MEA officials and a representative from Government of Gujarat. On the Uzbek side, it is led by Sardor Umurzakov, Deputy Prime Minister for Investments and Foreign Economic Affairs-Minister of Investments and Foreign Trade (MIFT) and includes First Deputy Foreign Minister, Chairman of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI), and senior officials from MIFT and Andijan. The first meeting of the Committee took place on 24 August 2020. Both sides reviewed projects through grant assistance, LOC and private investment proposals along with other aspects of bilateral cooperation in trade, investment and education fields.

21. **Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC): Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC):** The 13th meeting of the Uzbek-Indian Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation was held in New Delhi on 28 July. The meeting was chaired by Deputy Prime Minister - Minister of Investment and Foreign Trade of Uzbekistan Mr. Jamshid Khodjaev and Minister of Railways, Trade and Industry of India Shri Piyush Goyal. The 12<sup>th</sup> session of the IGC on Trade, Economic, Scientific & Technological Cooperation was held on 04 December 2020 through video meeting.

22. **Foreign Office Consultation (FOC):** The 16th round of India-Uzbekistan Foreign Office Consultations (FoC) held on 7 August 2023 in Tashkent. The consultations were co-chaired by Shri Sanjay Verma, Secretary (West) and Mr. Bakhromjon Aloyev, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan. The 15<sup>th</sup> round of Foreign Office Consultations was hosted by the Indian side in May 2022. The 14<sup>th</sup> round was held in New Delhi in November 2020.

23. **JWG on CT:** The last (8<sup>th</sup>) meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism was held in New Delhi in July 2019. Several areas for training and capacity building in the field of law enforcement and counter terrorism operations were identified by the two sides for cooperation.

24. **India-Central Asia Business Council:** Second meeting of the India-Central Asia Business Council hosted by FICCI was held on 28 October 2020 through VC with participation of Chairman of Uzbek Chamber of Commerce and Industry Mr. A. Ikramov. The dialogue brought together Business Councils of all five Central Asian countries to take the trade and investment partnership forward with special focus on energy, pharmaceuticals, automotive, agro-processing, education, urban infrastructure and transport, civil aviation, IT and tourism. The Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan organised India- Uzbekistan Business Forum on 21 October 2020 and 22 November 2021.

25. **India- Central Asia Dialogue:** Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan, Mr. Kamilov participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> India-Central Asia Dialogue held at the level of Foreign Ministers on 28 October 2020 which was hosted by India in the virtual mode. FM Kamilov took part in the third meeting of the foreign ministers of the India-Central Asia Dialogue in New Delhi on 19 December 2021. The meeting participants discussed issues of further strengthening ties between India and the countries of Central Asia in the spheres of politics, economics, digitalization and cultural and humanitarian direction. An exchange of views took place on the current dynamics of regional cooperation, measures to jointly counter threats and challenges to stability. Particular attention was paid to the situation in Afghanistan. As a result of the event, a Joint Statement was adopted. On the sidelines of the India-Central Asia Dialogue, FM Kamilov also met with PM and EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar.

26. Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce & Industry also participated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> India-Central Asia Business Council (ICABC) meeting which was hosted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI) in virtual mode held on the same day. The report of the ICABC meeting was presented by FICCI later in the day to all the Foreign Ministers participating in the India-Central Asia Dialogue.

### **Defence Cooperation**

27. Defence cooperation has acquired a new level of intensity following the visit of the then Defence Minister of Uzbekistan Maj. Gen. Abdulalam Azizov from 4-7 September 2018 and the visit of Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh to Uzbekistan on 1-3 November 2019. An MoU on Military Medicine was signed. As a follow up of MoU on Military Education signed in October 2018, two institutional level MoUs were also signed for cooperation in training and capacity building. RM inaugurated the first-ever joint military exercise between India and Uzbekistan from 4-14 November 2019.

28. After the first edition of Joint counter terrorism military exercise held in Uzbekistan in November 2019, the armies of India and Uzbekistan concluded 10 day-long joint military exercises at Raniket, Uttarakhand from 10-19 March 2021. 45 soldiers each from the Uzbek and Indian armies participated in the exercise. India-Uzbekistan Joint Military Exercise- 'Dustlik' conducted from 24 to 31 March 2022. The joint India-Uzbekistan focused on counter-terrorism operations in semi-urban terrain. India has also assisted in setting up an India Room at the Armed Forces Academy of Uzbekistan in Tashkent.

29. Hon'ble Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh visited Uzbekistan on 23-25 August to attend SCO Defence Ministers meeting. During the visit, Shri Rajnath Singh held bilateral meetings with his Uzbek counterpart Lieutenant General Bakhodir Kurbanov.

### **Security Cooperation**

30. India and Uzbekistan share common perspectives on a number of security issues, including on terrorism, trans-national organized crime, illegal trafficking and smuggling, etc. The main focus of our engagement in this sphere has been to provide assistance to Uzbek security agencies through training and capacity building.

31. As part of the growing cooperation in the security sphere, Minister of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan Pulat Bobojonov visited India from 20-22 November 2019. During the visit, he

held consultations with Home Minister Shri Amit Shah. The two Ministers signed an Agreement on Security Cooperation.

### **Bilateral Trade and Investments**

32. Bilateral trade at about USD 690 million (as per Uzbek statistics) is well below potential. The major items of India's exports are pharmaceutical products, mechanical equipment, vehicle parts, services, optical instruments and equipment. India's import from Uzbekistan consist largely of fruit and vegetable products, services, fertilizers, juice products and extracts, and lubricants.

**As per figures released by the Uzbek Ministry of Investment and Foreign Trade, trend of Uzbekistan's bilateral trade with India has been as follows:**

Year (Jan- Dec)	Imports from India (in US\$ million)	Exports to India (in US\$ million)	Total trade turnover (in US\$ million)
2014	248.8	67.9	316.7
2015	260.6	58.7	319.3
2016	318.2	48.3	366.5
2017	291.1	33.8	325.0
2018	261.4	25.1	286.5
2019	330.5	25.0	355.5
2020	423	19.7	442.7
2022	654.9	35.6	690.5

33. India and Uzbekistan have signed a Joint Statement in September 2019 to set up a joint feasibility study for entering into negotiations for a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA).

34. Notable Indian investments by Indian companies include those in the field of pharmaceuticals, amusement parks, automobile components, and hospitality industry. Indian majors like GMR have expressed interest in investment in airports, development of air corridor, Navoi cargo complex in Uzbekistan; KDAH (Ambani Hospital) from Mumbai has expressed interest in setting up a specialty hospital. During the visit of CM Gujarat, a ground breaking ceremony for setting up a pharmaceutical plant with an investment of USD 50 million by M/s Cadila was held. Investments in various fields, including pharma and healthcare, textiles and auto components, agriculture and food processing, and mining and jewellery sector are in various stages of discussion. In October 2019, Amity University and

Sharda University have opened campuses in Tashkent and Andijan respectively. Indian institutions like iCreate are actively cooperating with Uzbek counterparts for promoting start-up ecosystem in Uzbekistan and training entrepreneurs in setting up incubators. Indian companies like Dev IT have entered into bilateral cooperation in field research, technologies, start-ups and innovations with budding Uzbek partners. NTPC is also participating in various tenders including solar PV power plants and consultancy assignment for gas projects in Uzbekistan.

35. Bilateral Investment Treaty is under negotiation between both countries.

### **Cooperation during the Covid-19 pandemic**

36. India gifted HCQ and Paracetamol tablets sought by Uzbekistan, along with lifting ban on export of essential medicines to fight Covid-19. India also conducted e-ITEC programmes for capacity building of Medical professionals from Uzbekistan.

37. 660,000 doses of Covishield vaccine were delivered from Serum Institute of India to Uzbekistan under the COVAX initiative on 17 March 2021. In India's fight against the second wave of COVID-19, Uzbekistan provided 100 Oxygen concentrators and 2000 injections of Remdesivir carried by Uzbekistan Airways flight on 1 May 2021 to deliver at New Delhi.

### **JWGs and Sectoral Cooperation**

38. **Textiles:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the JWG on Textiles was held in Tashkent alongside the 11<sup>th</sup> IGC in August 2018.

39. **IT:** The 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the JWG on IT was held in Tashkent alongside the 11<sup>th</sup> IGC in August 2018. An expert from Software Technology Park of India (STPI) has been deputed to assist with establishment and further expansion of an IT Park in Tashkent. The first phase of IT Park was inaugurated in July 2019.

40. **Pharmaceutical and Healthcare:** This is a high priority for the Uzbek side. The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the JWG on Pharmaceutical and Healthcare was held in Tashkent alongside the 11<sup>th</sup> IGC in August 2018. Investment by Indian companies in pharma as well as medical care sectors has been a major focus for the Uzbek side.

41. **Tourism:** The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the JWG on Tourism (set up under an MoU signed in October 2018) was held in Tashkent alongside the 11<sup>th</sup> IGC in August 2018. On 1 April 2017, an e-Visa scheme was introduced for Uzbek nationals. The Uzbek government has also extended e-Visa facility to Indian tourists. Uzbekistan has also emerged as a significant source of medical tourism with about 8,000 Uzbeks annually seeking medical treatment in India. India too has emerged as a growing source of tourists for Uzbekistan with about 40,000 tourists having visited in 2017.

42. **Agriculture:** The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the JWG on Agriculture (set up under an MoU signed in October 2018) was held on 5 September 2019 through DVC. During the visit of CM Gujarat, an agreement for cooperation in agro-processing sector, including the entire value chain comprising organic cultivation, cold storage, warehousing and processing was reached. The Uzbek government has pledged allotment of initially 35,000 hectares, increasing eventually to 50,000 hectares for this purpose.

43. India has granted market access for lemon and melon from Uzbekistan. Pest Risk Analysis (PRA) for plum and sweet cherries have been completed and is further under process. Uzbekistan has granted market access for banana and mango from India. PRA for Soyabean oil cake has been completed and additional information has been sought. Request for PRA from India include wheat, wheat flour, potato, pomegranate and pomegranate seeds.

44. **e-Governance and ICT:** The creation of a Joint Committee on e-Governance and ICT has been envisaged under the MoU signed on 28 September 2018.

45. **S&T:** A Joint Committee on S&T was formed in February 2019 as envisaged under an MoU signed in October 2018. In pursuance to the agreement, a Programme of Cooperation in S&T for the period of 2019-22 was signed in October 2019, facilitating joint research, visits of scientists and specialists and fellowships and internships for Uzbeks in premiere Indian scientific institutions.

46. **Space Cooperation:** The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the JWG on Space Cooperation (set up based on an Agreement signed in October 2018) was held in April 2019 through DVC.

47. **MSME:** The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the JCM on MSME took place in Tashkent on 3 October 2011.

48. **Civil Aviation:** In pre-Covid times there were 6 weekly flights between Tashkent and Delhi in addition to 3 to Amritsar and 3 to Mumbai operated by Uzbek Airways. Uzbek Airways now runs four flights in a week on Tashkent-Delhi sector.

49. **Solar Power:** Uzbekistan has expressed interest in joining the International Solar Alliance. There is interest in Indian participation in development of solar power sector through competitive bidding.

50. **Oil & Gas:** Uzbekneftgaz and OVL are in talks for cooperation in oil & gas sector, including for allocation and exploration of specific blocks.

### **Joint Business Council**

51. The first meeting of the India-Uzbekistan Joint Business Council was held in Ahmedabad on 17 January 2019. The second meeting was held in October 2020 through virtual mode. It is led on the Indian side by CII and on the Uzbek side by CCI.

### **Development Assistance and Line of Credit (LOC)**

52. In response to a request for LOC of USD 1 billion by the Uzbek Government, a Line of Credit Agreement for USD 200 million for construction of affordable housing and social infrastructure projects was signed between the State Investment Committee of Uzbekistan and the EXIM Bank in January 2019. India has also conveyed an offer for additional USD 800 million as Line of Credit/Buyers Credit to Uzbekistan. The Uzbek side had identified 4 projects under LOC so far and have signed an agreement to this effect.

53. A Joint Centre for Information Technology was set up in 2006 and upgraded in 2014 with Indian assistance. An India-Uzbekistan Entrepreneurship Development Centre (EDC) was

inaugurated on 24 December 2018 in Tashkent. An Indian expert has been deputed at EDC for training and capacity building of Uzbek entrepreneurs.

54. India has offered grant assistance for implementation of High Impact Community Development Projects to Uzbekistan. Two MOUs were signed in Tashkent on 11 December 2021 at the cost of about USD 2.5 Million under India's grant assistance.

### **Education and Culture**

55. Uzbekistan has been sending candidates under the ITEC programme since 1993. More than 2400 Uzbek professionals have undergone training under ITEC in premiere institutes in India so far. 164 slots were utilized in 2019 in regular and specialized courses.

56. As per the MoU between Gujarat Forensic Sciences University in Gandhinagar and Ministry of Innovation Development of Uzbekistan, various post-graduate courses are now open for admission to Uzbek students along with training of Uzbek officials in different forensic sciences. Uzbek students also avail of ICCR and Kendriya Hindi Sansthan scholarships. There are also scholarships under AYUSH and short-term scholarships for music and dance, in addition to two annual scholarships for one-year course in Hindi by KHS Agra. Regularly, Hindi and Urdu teachers are getting support of the Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture (LBSCIC) for attending refresher courses/participating in International Conferences/Vishwa Hindi Diwas. Indian faculty and scholars visit Uzbek institutions as guest lecturers and for research and conferences. The Samarkand State University has set up an Indian Study Centre, which is headed at present by a senior professor from India. Bukhara State University, Tashkent State University of Oriental Studies have also opened an India Room with IT instruments installed in it. The rooms will be equipped with books, musical instruments, dresses, artifacts with assistance of GOI, depicting various facets of Indian culture.

57. There is close affinity between the cultures of the two countries. Indian films, actors and songs are extremely popular across the country. There is interest in reviving the tradition of co-production and organization of and participation in film festivals. There is a growing trend among Indian film producing houses to use Uzbekistan as a location to shoot their films.

58. There are regular visits of cultural troupes from both sides. LBSCIC teaches Hindi, yoga, Kathak and Tabla and holds cultural performances across Uzbekistan. Hindi is taught in several schools and universities in Tashkent. Mr. Khayriddin Sultanov, State Advisor to President and Mr. Ruslanbek Davletov, Justice Minister represented Uzbekistan at the concluding event, on 02 October 2018, of the week-long Mahatma Gandhi International Sanitation Convention. Uzbek Government released a postage stamp on Mahatma Gandhi to mark his 150<sup>th</sup> birth anniversary.

59. The Surajkund Crafts Mela entered into an MoU in September 2019 with Kokand International Handicrafts Exhibition for mutual participation and cooperation in each other's events.

60. In October 2020, the Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture (LBSCIC) run by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) completed its 25 years of establishment in Uzbekistan. The celebrations on the occasion were kicked off by holding a cultural programme at the LBSCIC attended by Her Excellency Ms. Kamola Akilova, Deputy Minister of Culture of

Uzbekistan. On this occasion, a live congratulatory message through video conference was delivered by Dr. Vinay Sahasrabuddhe, President of ICCR in which he recalled the great contribution made by the LBSCIC in strengthening India-Uzbekistan cultural relations and imparting quality training in the fields of Indian classical dances, Yoga, Tabla and the teaching of Hindi in Uzbekistan.

### **Diaspora**

61. There are about 5000 Indian nationals living in Uzbekistan, in Tashkent, Qarshi, Andijon, Ferghana, Urgench and Bukhara regions. The community hails from different parts of India and enjoys a positive image. They are involved mostly in pharmaceutical and hospitality businesses; some are university and school teachers; and many serve as doctors in local hospitals and many work in the oil and gas sector. After Ukraine crisis, Uzbekistan has become a major hub for Indian medical students. Presently about 3000 students are studying medicine in different medical universities of Uzbekistan. This year, first time a diaspora Indian living in Uzbekistan became the recipient of the prestigious **Pravasi Bhartiya Samman Award**. This award was conferred upon Mr. Ashok Kumar Tiwari, Chairman of the India Club Tashkent who is the business owner of M/s. Shayana Farm which is a local pharmaceuticals company.

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**06.10.2023**