

India-Uzbekistan Bilateral Relations

India and Uzbekistan have historical connections going back several centuries. The southern and south-eastern regions of modern-day Uzbekistan were part of the Kushana Empire. Relics of Buddhist monasteries have been discovered in Samarkand, Termez and other Uzbek cities. The Silk Route passed through Samarkand and Bukhara.

2. Bilateral high-level exchanges have been taking place since the Soviet times. Several presidential and prime ministerial visits to Uzbekistan have taken place starting from Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's visit in 1955. Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri passed away in Tashkent during his visit in January 1966. Uzbekistan declared its independence on 1 September 1991. President Islam Karimov was in India in August 1991 just as the Soviet Union was breaking up. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao and Dr. Manamohan Singh visited Uzbekistan in 1993 and 2006 respectively. President Islam Karimov visited India four times in 1994, 2000, 2005 and 2011.

3. PM Shri Narendra Modi paid a bilateral visit to Uzbekistan in 2015; and visited Tashkent for the SCO Council of Heads of States meeting in 2016, when India signed the Memorandum of Obligations for joining the SCO.

4. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev paid State visit to India on 30 September- 01 October 2018. During the visit, 17

Agreements/MoUs were signed concerning scientific and technical cooperation, agriculture, tourism, military education, justice, health and medical science, pharmaceuticals, space exploration for peaceful purposes and other areas. Agreements were signed on establishment of cooperation between Andijan region and state of Gujarat, the cities of Samarkand and Agra, organization of a free pharmaceutical zone. Both countries agreed to initiate action to start negotiations on a Preferential Trade Agreement.

5. President Shavkat Mirziyoyev participated in the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit-2019 in January 2019 as Guest of honour. Deputy Chairman of the State Investment Committee signed the framework agreement with the Exim Bank worth US\$200 million for construction of affordable housing and other social infrastructure projects. India has also offered to consider further credit of USD 800 million under Lines of Credit and Buyer's Credit mechanism of Exim Bank. The first meeting of the India Uzbekistan Joint Business Council was held in Ahmadabad on 17 January, 2019.

6. The first "India-Central Asia" Dialogue with participation of Afghanistan took place in Samarkand in January 2019 jointly hosted by India and Uzbekistan. Foreign Ministers emphasised the need to take measures for promoting mutual trade, strengthening cooperation in attracting investments, innovations and technology to the economies of the region, developing transit and transport-communication potential of Central Asian countries, increasing tourism, as well as implementing specific joint

projects in the spheres of science, medicine, education and sports.

7. Foreign Office Consultations are held at regular intervals. The 13th round of FOCs was held in March 2017 in New Delhi. A Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism was set up in 2003. The 18th meeting of JWG was held in July 2019 in New Delhi.

8. Defence Cooperation between the two countries has seen a remarkable increase since the visit of Maj. Gen. Abdusalam Azizov, the then Defence Minister of Uzbekistan to India from 4-7 September, 2018. The first annual JWG on Defence was held on 27-28 February, 2019 at New Delhi. RM visited Uzbekistan on 1-3 November, 2019 to attend the meeting of Council of SCO heads of Government in Tashkent. RM also inaugurated the first-ever joint military exercise between India and Uzbekistan from 4-14 November 2019. Minister of Internal Affairs of Uzbekistan, Mr. Pulat Bobojonov visited India from 20-23 November, 2019.

9. India and Uzbekistan have a modest bilateral trade turnover of over 300 million Dollars. Pharmaceuticals is a major area of both trade and investment by India. Medical tourism to India has increased sharply in the recent past.

10. Notable Indian investments have been made by Indian companies in the fields of pharmaceuticals, amusement parks, automobile components, hospitality industry. A Joint Centre for Information Technology was set up in 2006 and upgraded in 2014. An IT Park in Tashkent,

established with Indian assistance, was inaugurated in July 2019.

11. Shri Vijay Rupani, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Gujarat led a high level official delegation along with over 60 member-strong business delegation to Uzbekistan from 19-23 October, 2019. In Andijan, the CM opened the International Business Forum "Open Andijan" in Andijan. Foundation stone for a Cadila manufacturing Unit, which is planning to invest USD 650 million in coming eight years in the Pharmaceutical zone in Andijon was laid. Business Forums and B2Bs were held in Andijan, Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara. The extensive business deliberations made concrete headway in mining, jewelry making, agriculture (cultivation to food processing), healthcare, IT and hospitality sectors.

12. The 11th Session of the Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation was held on 16 August, 2018. On the margins of the IGC, Joint Working Group meetings on Cotton & Textiles, Information & Technology, Tourism and Pharmaceuticals were held. Business forums anchored by CII and Uzbek Chamber of Commerce were held in Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara.

13. There are six weekly flights between Tashkent and Delhi, 3 to Amritsar and 3 to Mumbai. On 1 April 2017, an electronic tourist visa scheme was introduced for the Uzbek nationals. India has emerged as a major source of tourists to Uzbekistan with over 25,000 tourists in 2017. The Uzbek government has introduced an e-visa scheme

for 51 countries, including India. India joined the Ashgabat Agreement in February 2018.

14. Uzbekistan has been sending candidates under the ITEC programme since 1993. 140 slots have been allotted this year. Last year more than 165 candidates underwent training including all courses, including 142 candidates in regular annual slots. Uzbek students also regularly avail of ICCR and Kendriya Hindi Sansthan scholarships. 20 scholarships under General scholarships for UG/PG/Research degrees and 5 under CEP have been allotted for 2019-20.

15. In 2018-19, 28 specialists from State Inspection of Uzbekistan underwent training in different aspect of quarantine under ITEC at National Institute of Plant Health Management (NIPHM), Hyderabad. Capacity building training for 15 Uzbek specialists in the fields of Laboratory diagnostics, Phyto-sanitary risk analysis, Monitoring of the fields, and Treatment methods is being conducted at NIPHM from 22 October - 04 November, 2019.

16. There is close affinity between the cultures of the two countries. Indian films, actors and songs are extremely popular across the country. After the first major co-production of Alibaba aur Chalis Chor in 1980, Indo-Uzbek jointly produced film 'Hoichoi Unlimited' premiered in Uzbekistan on 31 March 2019. Indian film producing houses like Indo- Soviet films are showing growing interest in shooting films in Uzbekistan.

17. 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 CHS Agra. Regularly, Hindi and Urdu teachers are getting the support from our Cultural Centre, the Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture (LBSCIC) for attending refresher courses/participating in International Conferences/Vishwa Hindi Diwas.

18. There are regular visits of cultural troupes from both sides. The LBSCIC teaches Hindi, yoga, Kathak and tabla and holds cultural performances across Uzbekistan. Hindi is taught in several schools and universities in Tashkent. Indian faculty and scholars visit Uzbek institutions as guest lecturers and for research and conferences. The Samarkand State University has set up an Indian Studies Centre, which is headed at present by a senior professor from India. On the occasion of 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, Uzbek Government released a postage stamp on Mahatma Gandhi.
