

## **India-Uzbekistan Relations**

### **Political Relations**

Relations between Central Asia and India have their roots deep in history. Buddhism is said to have travelled to China through Uzbekistan which penetrated Central Asia, inter alia, through areas of today's Uzbekistan. The founder of the Mughal dynasty, Babur, came from Uzbekistan. It is said that Indian merchants based in Samarkand and Bukhara were an integral part of local economy. There are close cultural linkages which have influenced Indian architecture, dance, music and cuisine. Indian movies have traditionally been popular in Uzbekistan.

Even during Soviet times, Indian leaders visited Tashkent. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru accompanied by Smt. Indira Gandhi visited Uzbekistan in 1955 and 1961. Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri visited Uzbekistan in January 1966 and died in Tashkent. His name has been commemorated in Tashkent - a street and school are named after him and there is also a statue and a bust in his memory in the city.

In August 1991, as the vents leading to the disintegration of the USSR unfolded, President Karimov in his capacity as Chairman of Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan was visiting India. Uzbekistan declared its independence on 1<sup>st</sup> September 1991.

Consulate General of India in Tashkent was formally inaugurated on 7<sup>th</sup> April 1987. Following Uzbekistan's independence, it was upgraded to the level of Embassy through the signing of a Protocol on Diplomatic and Consular matters on 18<sup>th</sup> March 1992.

The subsequent period has been characterized by frequent high-level exchanges. Prime Minister Narasimha Rao visited Uzbekistan in 1993 and Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh on 25-26 April, 2006. President Karimov paid State visits to India in 1994, 2000, 2005 and recently in May 2011.

In the more recent period, Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee visited Tashkent for the meeting of ADB Board of Governors in May 2010. On the sidelines, he held talks with Uzbek First Deputy PM and Finance Minister Rustam S. Azimov and Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyayev. EAM S.M. Krishna visited Tashkent in June 2010 to attend the SCO Summit. On the sidelines he met President Islam Karimov. Earlier, EAM S.M. Krishna had visited Uzbekistan in October 2009. Minister of State for Information Technology, Sachin Pilot visited Tashkent in October 2011. In November 2011 COAS Gen. V.K. Singh visited Uzbekistan.

Bilateral relations are managed through a robust mechanism including a Joint Commission, which oversees trade and economic relations. Uzbekistan and India have signed Agreements/MOUs/Protocols/Joint Statements in areas such as trade, investment, education, civil aviation, science & technology, telecommunications, agriculture and IT. Uzbekistan supported India's

candidature for the non-permanent seat in the UN Security Council for 2011-2012, and has been publicly supporting India's inclusion as permanent member of the UNSC. During President Karimov's visit to India in May 2011, bilateral relations were elevated to that of strategic partnership.

The 11<sup>th</sup> round of political consultations was held in New Delhi on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2012.

### **Commercial Relations**

Trade relations between India and Uzbekistan are governed by the Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation signed in May 1993. This agreement provides for such things as mutual MFN treatment, promotion of economic, industrial, scientific and technical cooperation, including in the field of training of personnel, active participation of small and medium sized enterprises in bilateral economic cooperation, and counter-trade, etc. India and Uzbekistan also signed an Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation in 1993 and for Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection in May 1999. The Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) has met nine times, and the last Session was held in Tashkent on 4 May 2011.

### **India- Uzbekistan bilateral Trade**

| <b>Year</b>                 | <b>Imports from India<br/>(in U.S.\$ million)</b> | <b>Exports to India<br/>(in U.S.\$ million)</b> | <b>Total Trade Turnover<br/>(in U.S.\$ Million)</b> | <b>Percentage Change over Previous Year</b> |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| 2008                        | 79.9  | 11.1  | 91  | 23.80%                                      |
| 2009                        | 101.6   | 23.1  | 124.7   | 37%   |
| 2010                        | 123.8   | 27.2  | 151   | 21.10%                                      |
| 2011                        | 137.6   | 22.2  | 159.8   | 5.83%                                       |
| 2012<br>(January-September) | 116.8   | 22.6  | 139.4   | 16%   |

*(Source: Uzbekistan State Committee for Statistics)*

India's main exports to Uzbekistan include drugs, other pharmaceutical products, paper, wood products, machinery, garments & fabrics, tea, plastic items, chemicals, surgical items and consumer goods. Beans, chemicals and non-ferrous metals constitute the largest item of Indian imports from Uzbekistan apart from machinery, silver, raw cotton & silk, pulses & services.

According to the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, India occupied the 15th place among countries that are trading partners of Uzbekistan, covering 0.7% of the total trade turnover of the Uzbekistan.

India and Uzbekistan have highlighted absence of surface transport connectivity several times. President Karimov during his visit to India in May 2011 again raised this issue and sought Indian support to several transport corridors being planned in Central Asia with Uzbek participation.

There is considerable interest in Uzbekistan in cooperation with India in the area of Information Technology. An MoU on the establishment of India-Uzbek IT Centre in Tashkent (involving Indian assistance of Rs. 30 million) was signed in October 2004 during the visit of Uzbek Foreign Minister to India. The India-Uzbekistan Centre for Information Technology, named after Jawaharlal Nehru, was inaugurated by Prime Minister during his visit to Uzbekistan in April 2006 in the Tashkent University of Information Technology (TUIT). The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of Joint Working Group (JWG) on IT was held in New Delhi on 24<sup>th</sup> January 2011. An MoU on cooperation in the IT sector with Uzbekistan was signed during President Karimov's visit to India in May 2011. MOS for Communication and IT Shri Sachin Pilot visited Tashkent from 13-15 October 2011 during which a Joint Action Plan (JAP) to upgrade the Jawaharlal Nehru Centre for IT was signed.

Uzbek Air operates 15 flights a week between Uzbekistan and India. Under Inter-Governmental Agreements, Uzbek Airways has flying rights to Delhi, Amritsar and Trivandrum and Indian Airlines to Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara.

### **Cultural Relations**

Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture working under Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), was established in Tashkent in 1995 and has been a household name in Uzbekistan for its cultural activities. Besides organizing seminar events relating to Indian culture, the Centre also organizes regular classes for Kathak, Yoga and Hindi language.

Six Uzbek educational institutions, nationwide, promote studies of Indian languages, particularly Hindi, from primary to post-graduate level. An India Chair was set up in 1996 at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent.

Uzbek Radio has completed 50 years of Hindi broadcasting in 2012. Uzbek TV channels have more than once telecast the Ramayan and Mahabharat serials.

India has gifted a 69-episode serial, "Kabhie Kabhie" to the National Television and Radio Company of Uzbekistan in September 2012 with telecast rights. This TV serial is presently being dubbed in Uzbek language for telecast.

A Protocol on cooperation in the field of mass media was signed in October

1992. Subsequently, during the visit of President Islam Karimov to India in May 2000, another Protocol for cooperation in the field of information and mass media was signed. This Protocol envisaged cooperation involving exchange of TV programmes, visit of journalists, participation in international film festivals, cooperation among the filmmakers of both feature films and documentaries, visit of Radio and TV personnel etc. During the same visit, an Agreement on Mutual Professional Cooperation between the National Information Agency of Uzbekistan and Press Trust of India was also signed.

Uzbekistan is a beneficiary of India's ITEC Programme since 1993-1994. Currently 150 slots are being allotted annually. The ITEC Programme has been very well received in Uzbekistan. Areas of training include information technology, English for professionals, management, journalism, diplomacy, small business planning, remote sensing, banking and hotel management etc. ITEC slot utilization from Uzbekistan has been 100% during the last three years (in 2010-2012 100% slots utilized). Twenty Scholarships are being offered to Uzbekistan annually for various courses in Indian Universities under ICCR's Scholarship Programmes.

### **Indian Community**

A small but vibrant Indian community lives in Uzbekistan. Mission maintains regular links with the community. The members of Indian community participate in functions organised on the occasion of Independence Day and Republic Day. The community participates in events like Holi, Diwali and cultural programmes organised under the aegis of Lal Bahadur Shastri Centre for Indian Culture.

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