

Kazakh-India Economic and Cultural Cooperation



* Dr. Mukta Tanwar

* PGT (Political Science), Directorate of Education, Govt. of NCT, Delhi

ABSTRACT

India-Kazakhstan contacts go back to the days of the Great Silk Route which passed from China to the Western world through the Central Asian region touching Southern Kazakhstan especially Shymkent and Zambul region. During the period between 12th and 13rd century nomadic and semi-nomadic Saka tribe reached India from Southern Kazakhstan. The cooperation between people of these countries resulted in deep-rooted linkages, which even today are evident in similarities in our food, language, dress and cultural habits. The route played a significance role in this cooperation, transporting not only commodities for trade, but more importantly knowledge and idea. The present paper is a modest study of two important aspects, which are essential to know so far as the intimacy of Kazakh-Indian bilateral relations concerned. The cooperation in economic, political, energy area and their cultural closeness. Further, to know the common regional and international challenges towards them on which they have a common approach.

Keywords: India, Kazakhstan, Central Asia, silk route, trade, culture

Introduction

Kazakhstan is the second largest republic of former Soviet Union. It is the heart of Eurasia. It stretches over a vast area of Northern and Central Eurasia. It is situated in Central Asia between the Ural River and courses of the Volga River to the West. Kazakhstan shares its boundaries with Russia, The People's Republic of China and the Central Asian Countries-Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, apart from having water boundaries of the Caspian Sea with Azerbaijan and Iran. It also shares the renowned Aral Sea with Uzbekistan. Having the area of 2.7 million sq. km., Kazakhstan is the ninth largest country of the world but rank 62nd in terms of population (15.8 million).

Like other Central Asian States in Kazakhstan Muslim are in majority, but it is secular country in Kazakhstan 64% are Muslim, 30% Russian Orthodox, 4% Catholic, less than 1% Protestants and other religions. After post-independence it was the only Central Asian Country where the titular nationality was not in majority. In 1989 Census, Kazakhs constituted 40.1% of population while Russian were 37.4% combined with Ukrainian (5.4%) and the Belorussian (1.1%) the slaves constituted 44.2% of the population. After independence, Kazakhstan appeared to be

the best placed among the Central Asian Countries. Its economic potential was connected to the oil sector. At present date Kazak Stands 7th rank in term of Oil stockpile, 6th in gas reserves and 2nd in Uranium reserves. It had a better base for creating a market economy, given its higher living standards and human capital endowments and it too was initially viewed as one of the more reformist Soviet successor states. Kazakhstan adopted the policy of liberalization and privatization. GDP of Kazakhstan in 2003 totalled US \$ 27.48 billion with 9.2%. In 2006 it attain US \$ 56 billion with 10.3%. Kazakhstan's GDP is larger than that of all the remaining Central Asian countries combined. Kazakhstan has established diplomatic relations with more then 120 countries. India was among the first country to recognize the independence of Kazakhstan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev's first official visit as a President of Kazakhstan was made to India in 1992, which shows the importance of New Delhi to Astana. Diplomatic relations were established on 22 February 1992 during this visit, when an appropriate protocol was signed by Mr. Tuleutay Suleymenov, Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, and Mr. Madhav Singh Solanki, Minister of External Affairs, Government of India. The implementation of Protocol

has started by opening of the Embassy of India in Almaty in May 1992 and subsequent establishment of the Embassy of Kazakhstan in New Delhi in 1993. In this condition every positive, development of bilateral relations in this continent creates a necessary potential of stability, economic development, demonstrate a visible example of civilized development of cooperation. India as a regional power possesses the authority and capability of influence the development events not only at the level of Asia but also at the world level. Kazakhstan with its huge deposits of energy resources is becoming a more and more important power influencing solution of problems not only in the Central Asia region but on the Central Eurasian space. The relation between Kazakhstan and India as sovereign states do not have a long history, their relations are only fifteen years old.

Economic Partnership

In 1993 Prime Minister P.V Narsimha Rao visited Kazakhstan. The setting up of cultural centre at Almaty was announced during this visit. The first meeting of the Indo-Kazakh Joint Commission was held in New Delhi in July 1993. In 1995-96 several important initiatives in area like hydrocarbons mining etc. were taken during the second session of the Indo-Kazakh Joint Commission. In 1996, Vice President K.R Naryanan visited Kazakhstan and President Nursultan Nazarbaev visited India, after these visits, working groups for focused cooperation in medium and small scale industries, peaceful uses of nuclear energy and defence were set up. It was decided that cooperation between the two in hydrocarbon sector would involve not only exploration and developmental activities but also investment such as refineries and pipelines as well as training programmes. Exchange of Ministerial visits gave continuity to the development of bilateral relations. Defence Minister Mr. Nurmagambetov (1995), first Deputy Prime Minister Dr. V.S. Shkocnic (1995), Foreign Minister Mr. Erlan Idrissov (2001), Minister of Trade and Industry Mr. A. Dzhaksybekov (2004), Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Mr. Baktykozha (2006) and Deputy Foreign Minister Mr. Nurlan Yermekbayev (Aug. 2007) visited India from Kazakhstan side; and MoS (Mines) Sh. B.S Yadav (1995) MoS for Commerce Sh. B.B Ramaian (1996), Defence Minister Sh. G. Fernandes (2003),

EAM Sh. Natwar Singh (2004), Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas Sh. M. Deora (2006) and Minister of Textiles Sh. Shankersingh Vaghela visited Kazakhstan from Indian side. Political interaction between India and Kazakhstan has been regular and mutually supportive in UN and other international organizations. Both have high level of understanding and share perception on each other concerns in the region.

Kazakhstan has a huge resource of energy and gas. India remains an energy deficient country and need to ensure a better supply. In the first half of the twenty first Century, India will be one of the top in five consumers of energy. Currently most of India's import comes from the Persian Gulf region, but to enhance its energy security India need to look at an alternative source of energy. In this respect Caspian region can be an alternative to 30 billion barrels of oil and gas 3.0 trillion cubic meters. Kazakhstan is the major trading partner of India in Central Asian Region. The trade between India and Kazakhstan was reached up to 410.74 (US Million \$) in 2012 (Source: Directorate General of Foreign Trade, Government of India).

Cultural Partnerships

Ethnic and cultural contacts between Kazakhstan and India have existed for many centuries and go back to migration of Aryan tribes from steppes of Eurasia to plains of Indostan sub-continent. Vedic literature for example Rigveda, Atharaveda etc. contain information about the presence of Indo-Aryan tribes on the territory of Kazakhstan and Central Asia, though it is fragmental. In the Neolithic epoch most of the territory of Central Asia, Kazakhstan and Northern India was apart of large area inhabited by agricultural cultures close to each other, which went through similar progress of social development. Buddhism played a great role in development and intensification of contacts between India and Kazakhstan. This religion in Kazakhstan has started a new era in the relations between these two states. The influence of Buddhism was so strong and diverse that a new culture was formed in Kazakhstan and Central Asia. But as sovereign countries their ethnic started with new phase. Both nations are similar in many respects. Both countries are strong followers of secularism and have multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies. The

Kazakh people like Indian believe in the principle of Unity in diversity. As an example of commitment of religious tolerance, Astana had hosted the second congress of religion's leaders of world with the aim to develop dialogue, between different faiths. Over 27 delegations from around the world including India took part in the congress. Both nations acknowledge the importance of frequent consultations to promote peace, stability and prosperity in the region. Both have noted with satisfaction the progress of Conference on Interaction & Confidence Building Measures in Asia which represented a unique initiative and agree that the forthcoming summit will be significant step forward. Both have also noted the progress being made by the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) as a regional organization Kazakhstan expressed the belief that considering India's geographical proximity in the neighborhood and its active participation on regional and global matters of cooperation, India's membership of SCO would add to the strength of that organization.

Existing Problems

After analyzing all the aspect it is seen that Kazakh-Indian bilateral relations have a bright prospect for future growth. But there are still some problems in Kazakh-Indian relation; the four problems are most prominent. First, the problem of connectivity in the region and communication links are problematic and at present the region is connected only through air links. Although, there is direct flight between Almaty-Delhi by Air Astana twice, a week on Wednesday and Saturday but it is too less. Secondly, apprehension of Indian manufacturing and investment companies about entering the new unfamiliar markets of Central Asia. This is due to the rather daunting conditions prevalent in this region. There is scarce availability of hard currency, money exchange facility and banking channels. It is true that both the govern-

ment are making efforts to create the right kind of atmosphere for the strengthening their bilateral relation. Land route option through Iran and Turkmenistan are also being explored. But both the governments need to consider some recommendations also i.e. invest in transaction corridor and great silk road, give each other the status of the most favored nation, participate more in international trade fairs, create a consortium for development of information technology, direct relations between existing or newly formed financial institutions and banking agencies and emphasize people to people contact etc.

Conclusion

Lastly, one can realize that the problems between the Kazakh-Indian Relations are minor and of institutional in nature and can be easily overcome with some better infrastructure between the two. Besides it, there is great potential for bright future and cooperation between these two states. Although the political understanding is good in India-Kazakh relations but the economic relation i.e. core part of any sort of relations in present scenario is not so deep. Both the states are having the similar ideology on international and regional issues and making cooperation at different levels. The cultural relations between India-Kazakhstan are stronger than any other bilateral relations. In October 2007 a Kazakh delegation of art and cultural workers visited India and presented concert programmes in several cities of India on the occasion of 15th anniversary of the diplomatic relationship of India and Kazakhstan. These programmes were totally based on Indian culture and remix of Indian-Kazakh culture. It means the base i.e. culture relations of India- Kazakhstan bilateral relations are strong and the pillars i.e. political and economic relation etc. would be stronger with the passage of time.

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