

सत्यमेव जयते

Embassy of India ASTANA

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Embassy of India ASTANA NEWSLETTER

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President Visits Papua New Guinea

President Shri Pranab Mukherjee paid a State Visit to Papua New Guinea (PNG) on April 28-29, 2016. He met Governor General Sir Michael Ogio on 28th April. The leaders exchanged views on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. They condemned terrorism and called upon the states to reject the use of terrorism as an instrument of state policy and agreed to strengthen cooperation in multilateral fora in combating terrorism.



President meets G.G. Sir Michael Ogio

Both leaders expressed confidence that PNG with its abundant natural resources and India with its managerial and technical expertise present complementarities which could be built upon for the mutual benefit of the two countries. They agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation in economic, security, defence, education and health sectors. Governor General reiterated his Government's support for India's candidature for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. PNG announced the facility of visa on arrival for Indian tourists and welcomed India's offer of a coastal surveillance radar system and coast guard patrol vessels. PNG agreed to develop new avenues of cooperation with India in exploration and development of its vast oil and gas resources. President Mukherjee announced that India would provide retro-viral drugs and equipment for the treatment of 20,000 HIV patients in PNG for one year.



President addresses PNG University

At the banquet hosted by Governor General, President Pranab Mukherjee said that India would be happy to share knowledge and expertise with the people of PNG on improved meth-

and techniques of agriculture, dairy and poultry farming, advanced capabilities in complex software and high precision equipment for space and nuclear-power industry, and technology for harnessing renewable energy from the sun and wind.

President Pranab Mukherjee visited Papua New Guinea University on April 29. He planted a Banyan sapling and paid a floral tribute to the bust of Mahatma Gandhi at the university. In his address, he referred to the announcement made at the Second Summit of the Forum for India-Pacific Islands Co-operation held in India in August, 2015 for doubling the number of scholarships earmarked for students from the Pacific Island Countries under ITEC Programme and invited more students from Papua New Guinea to take advantage of the scheme and attend institutions of higher education and centres of excellence in India.

President addressed the Business Council on 29th April. He observed that PNG's economic growth does not truly reflect the potential of a country blessed with abundant natural and mineral resources, highly fertile soil, plenty of fresh water and an extensive coastline teeming with fish and a splendid variety of precious seafood. He stressed that the challenge for PNG is how best to utilise the natural resources for value addition, generating employment and economically empowering its people. He launched the PNG-India Chamber of Commerce and expressed confidence that its efforts would greatly contribute to the intensification of the engagement between the business and industry sectors of the two countries.

Four Agreements/MOUs were signed on providing a line of credit of US\$ 100 million for development of infrastructure in PNG, cooperation on medical science, sharing India's advanced techniques and technologies in the agriculture sector and establishing an India-Papua New Guinea Centre for Excellence in IT in PNG.



President Nazarbayev Chairs 24th Session of People's Assembly of Kazakhstan

President Nazarbayev chaired the 24th Annual Session of the People's Assembly of Kazakhstan, dedicated to the 25th Anniversary of the country's independence, at the Palace of Peace and Reconciliation in Astana on April 26, 2016. He emphasized the importance of unity among people of Kazakhstan and elaborated on measures taken for economic development in the country including the Plan of Nation.



He stated that the trilingual (Kazakh, Russian and English) education system being introduced in schools in Kazakhstan would achieve unity and progress of the country and would equip the children for the future. He dismissed the reports of alleged sell of land to foreigners as rumours and that the fears in this regard were unfounded.



The Assembly adopted "Mangilik El", the Patriotic Act, which encompasses all the issues including Kazakhstan's economy, national values, morals, belief and vision of the world. President Nazarbayev stated that the Act creates a strong bridge between the present and the future of Kazakhstan and aims at strengthening the common identity and unity of Kazakhstan through development of Kazakh society on the principles of united citizenship and national values.

Later in the day, President Nazarbayev attended the premiere of the film "Tak slozhilis zvezdy" (*How the stars aligned*), a biopic based on his life from 1984 to 1992. The film tells about the political rise of President Nazarbayev as the leader of nation. It is a sequel of the biopic "Leader's Way", based on early life of President Nazarbayev.

India Tourism Office, Frankfurt Participates in 16th KITF, Almaty

16th Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair was held in Almaty from April 20-22, 2016. The Fair presented new features of tourism industry, informative seminars, training programmes, cost-effective solutions and special offers. The professionals in tourism industry from 40 countries participated in the Fair and demonstrated various tourist products.



India Tourism Office, Frankfurt along with three Indian tourist companies, Sharp Travels, Mystique Mantras Tours and Joys Resort took part in the Fair as co-exhibitors of India Stand. Three other Indian companies, Surya Travels, Yoga Tree and Sri Vidya Travels participated in the Fair separately. Shri R. Gururaj, First Secretary at the Embassy inaugurated the India Stand. Centre for Indian Classical Dances and Yoga Sanskar, Almaty presented Indian dances and yoga demonstration respectively during the inauguration. Over 3,000 people visited the India Stand during the Fair.

Embassy Participates in Karaganda Invest 2016

The 4th international investment forum "Karaganda Invest 2016" was held in the city of Karaganda on April 27, 2016. 151 key potential investment projects in mining, industry, tourism and agriculture sectors in Karaganda region were presented in the Forum. In his address, Mayor of Karaganda Region Mr. Nurmukhambet Kanapiyevich Abdibekov provided a broad overview of the investment potential of the region saying that the region is a powerful industrial center of Kazakhstan, abound in minerals and raw materials and is following a sound investment policy. He assured that his administration would extend all possible support to potential investors.



Vice-Minister of Investment and Development Mr. Albert Pavlovich Rau spoke about the efforts made by the Government to rationalize and reform its policy on subsoil exploitation. He emphasized that Kazakhstan is not just looking for investments, but also interested in attracting high-end technologies in the mining sector. He pointed out that global steel companies are working with modern technologies to produce new variants of steel geared for specific purposes and exhorted the local companies to apply modern technologies and add more value to their investments in the region. Deputy Mayor Mr. Anuar Muratovich Akhmetzhanov made a presentation on new projects available for investment in the region in the fields of agro-business, construction and subsoil use, public-private partnerships in social and health sectors, and tourism related projects. Panel discussions were held on "Natural Resources and Energy Sectors: a new outlook of traditional industries", "Development of the Agro-Industrial Potential of Karaganda Region" and "Karaganda Region: New Investment Horizons". The Forum was attended by 1035 representatives of small and medium enterprises and potential investor companies. Shri R. Gururaj, First Secretary at the Embassy attended the Forum.

Ambassador Gives Live Interview to Kazakh Radio

Ambassador gave a live interview to Kazakh Radio on April 20, 2016. He also responded to questions raised by listeners during the programme. Mr. Bhaskar Ojah played live music on Tabla and flute during the interview. The interview lasted for about 40 minutes. Excerpts from the interview are given below :



Interviewer : Please tell us about yourself and your service.

Ambassador : I am a career diplomat. I joined the Indian Foreign Service in 1993 at the age of 26 years. In the last 23 years, I have worked in Indian Embassies in Moscow, Kiev and Kathmandu, High Commission of India in London, Consulate General of India in St. Petersburg, and the Ministry of External Affairs in New Delhi. I also represented India as the member of the Executive Committee in the Commonwealth of Nations headquartered in London and the UN Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Communication Technologies in the Context of International Security in 2012-13.

Interviewer : What do you say as a valuable experience while working in our country?

Ambassador : I came to Kazakhstan one and a half years ago. I presented my credentials to President Nazarbayev on December 10, 2014. This is my first assignment as Ambassador. Therefore, every bit of experience that I gain here is immensely valuable. Of course, Kazakhstan is a beautiful country, unique in many ways. It has a large landmass endowed with rich natural resources. It has a small population but rich culture.

Interviewer : What awaits the tourists in your sunny country?

Ambassador : India is incredible. There is a lot in India to meet all kinds of tourist interests. It is dotted with attractive historical sites including 32 world heritage sites for people interested in Indian history and culture. India has several wildlife sanctuaries and botanical gardens for those who have special allure for wild or are interested in flora and fauna. India offers adventure tourism to those who prefer a more challenging holiday like water rafting, paragliding, trekking and mountain climbing.

People who seek spiritual solace can visit pilgrimage sites and meditation centers. For those who prefer beach and sunshine, water sports, scuba diving and snorkeling, India offers serene islands as well as the famous Goa and Kerala beaches with hundreds of miles of long beautiful coastline. To top up, India offers rich diversity of culinary offerings, art, culture, folklore, music, dance, tradition, costumes, handicrafts, fairs and festivals. In the last few years, India has emerged as one of the preferred destinations for medical tourists across the globe for those who want timely healthcare at par with the best available in the world.

Interviewer : What is the status of diaspora in your Republic? How many Kazakh people live in your country?

Ambassador : There are about 60-70 Kazakh citizens living in India. Most of them are students pursuing higher studies in various universities in India under the Government of India scholarship or self-financing schemes. There are also small number of Kazakh women married to Indian citizens and some Kazakh citizens working in India-Kazakh joint ventures operating in India.

Interviewer : What do Kazakh tourists mean for India?

Ambassador : All tourists are precious. Kazakh Tourists are specially valued for their refined tastes and deep interest in India's history and culture. They usually visit Goa, Agra, and ayurvedic, yoga and spiritual centers spread across India. They greatly contribute to promoting cross-cultural relations and friendship between our countries.

Mr. Bhaskar Ojah plays Indian classical music on Tabla, which influenced the next question.

Interviewer : What a nice music! Mr. Ambassador, can you please tell us in brief about this Indian musical instrument called Tabla?

Ambassador : Tabla is a percussion instrument in India which is used practically for all classical music and dance.

Interviewer : What kind of difficulties may Kazakhstani tourists possibly face in producing documents while applying for Indian visas?

Ambassador : Kazakhstani tourists travelling to India on an ordinary passport require tourist visa. In Kazakhstan, the visas may be obtained either at the Indian Embassy in Astana or its Representative office in Almaty. The visa issuance system for Kazakh citizens is quite liberal and user friendly, requiring minimal documentation. For a tourist visa, all that is required is online submission of application form, followed by a visit to the Indian Mission along with the printed application form, one photograph, a copy of flight booking and requisite fees. Visas are usually issued either the same day or the next day.

Interviewer : Can you name three tourist destinations in India that should be visited by Kazakhstani tourists on priority?

Ambassador : India offers a variety of attractions to cater to the specific tastes of the Kazakh tourists. However, for a beginner, I would recommend Goa and the Golden triangle connecting Delhi, Agra and Jaipur.

Telephone calls were received from listeners. **Listener No.1** : My name is Ms. Aigul. I am from Astana. I am planning to visit India with my aunt in August. Is it necessary for a woman up to 35 years of age to submit a letter of permission from her father, mother or husband while applying for tourist visa?

Ambassador : It is required as of now. However, if the applicant has any difficulty in getting such a letter, she may be exempted from producing it after being interviewed by the Consular Officer.

Listener No. 2 : I am Mr. Kudaibergen from Almaty city. How could India produce brilliant specialists in IT in such a short period of time?

Ambassador : Thank you very much for the question. India started paying high priority and attention to IT in the 1980s and established several colleges and institutions in this field. It also introduced IT in the existing colleges where such a discipline did not exist earlier. This helped India to develop a cadre of IT specialists which allowed this industry to flourish in India as well as provide such specialists to other countries.

Interviewer : Which country's citizens make the largest tourist inflow to India? What is the ranking of tourist arrivals from Kazakhstan?

Ambassador : The largest tourist inflow to India came from United States followed by Bangladesh, United Kingdom, Sri Lanka and Russia. In total, 8 million tourists visited India in 2015. Kazakhstan ranks fifty eight in the number of tourists visiting India.

Interviewer : What are the big festivals and holidays in 2016, which may attract tourists to India?

Ambassador : A large number of festivals and holidays are celebrated in India with great fervor and enthusiasm. Some of the festivals are celebrated all over India, while others only in specific parts of the country. The three biggest festivals are Holi, Dussehra and Diwali. Holi is the festival of colours. It normally falls in the month of March. Dussehra and Diwali are the festivals of victory of good over evil and family re-union. They normally fall in October-November. Among other religious festivals, Hindus celebrate Shiv Ratri, Ram Navami and Janmashtami; Muslims celebrate Id and Birthday of Prophet Mohammad; Christians celebrate Christmas day; Sikhs celebrate Guru Nanak's Birthday; Buddhists celebrate Budha Purnima; Zoroastrian and Bahai communities celebrate Nauryz festival; and Jains celebrate Mahavir Jayanti, the birthday of the 24th Tirthankar, which is today. Among regional festivals, the biggest and most spectacular are Rath Yatra festival in Puri, Camel fair in Pushkar, and Kumbh Mela held in Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik and Ujjain by rotation. The Kumbh Mela is the world's largest congregation of religious pilgrims. India celebrates three national days, the Republic Day on 26th January, the Independence Day on 15th August and Mahatma Gandhi's birth anniversary on 2nd October.

Interviewer : We would like to know the statistics of tourism. How many Kazakhstani spent their holidays in your country in 2015?

Ambassador : 16,000 Kazakhstani tourists visited India in 2015 and 17,000 visited in 2014.

Interviewer : Mr. Ambassador, we would like to know what brings our countries closer?

Ambassador : The relations between India and Kazakhstan are deep-rooted and historical. They can be characterized as being civilizational in scope and content. The relations date back to at least 2500 years ago when members of the Saka tribes traveled and assimilated in India. Since then, there has been a constant exchange of goods and ideas between the two countries with Buddhism travelling from India to Central Asia and Sufism from Central Asia to India through the teachings of Khwaja Ahmed Yassawi. The illustrious Mughal dynasty founded by Babur in India included some very farsighted and visionary rulers and patrons of arts like Akbar and Shahjahan. They immensely contributed to the Indian culture and civilization. The influence of Central Asian art, culture, architecture and even cuisine can be easily seen in the Indian art, culture, architecture and cuisine. More recently, in the last five to six decades, we have seen the reverse flow of the cultural influences from India through the popularity of Indian films, culture, dance, music and yoga in Kazakhstan. The Indian film stars Raj Kapur and Mithun Chakraborty, as well as TV serials, Madhubala and Kelin are as popular in Kazakhstan as they are in India.

At political level, the visit of the first Prime Minister of India Jawahar Lal Nehru and his daughter Indira Gandhi to Kazakhstan in 1955 made a deep imprint in the minds of the people of Kazakhstan. Many girls born in Kazakhstan following this visit were named Indira, which has become a popular name in Kazakhstan today. A vivid testimony of our close relations is the fact that President Nazarbayev chose India to be the first foreign country outside CIS to visit in February, 1992 after Kazakhstan attained independence in December, 1991. Our relations have steadily grown since then. India has been a consistent supporter of Kazakhstan's initiative on Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia and Kazakhstan supports India's permanent membership of UNSC. One of the first major foreign investments in Kazakhstan came from a prominent Indian businessman Mr. Laksmi Mittal. Today, Kazakhstan is India's largest trade and investment partner in Central Asia. The recent visit by our Prime Minister to Kazakhstan has further strengthened these relations and opened new areas of cooperation.

Listener No. 3: My name is Ms. Aigul. I am from Atyrau. Indian movies are highly popular in your country. And we, Kazakhstani people like Indian movies. We watch Indian films on TV regularly. My question is how India teaches and develops such actors and actresses? And one more question: How can I travel to India as I would like to visit the country.

Ambassador: There is a commercial dynamics of preparing the actors and actresses. There are reputed institutions in India which teach people in the art of acting. They produce actors and actresses for the film industry. Air Astana operates daily flights between Almaty and New Delhi. It takes 3½ hours to fly between Almaty and Delhi. The flight leaves Almaty at 7.55 AM and reaches New Delhi at 11.10 AM and the return flight starts from New Delhi at 12.20 PM and arrives in Almaty at 4.35 PM.

Interviewer: What is the feature in the people of India that specially attracts tourists?

Ambassador: People in India are freedom and fun loving. They love to interact with other people. A wide diversity of culture, religions and languages in India makes Indians very open-minded and adaptable. They adjust easily and mingle freely with people from diverse backgrounds. Guests particularly have a special place in India, embedded in its tradition, 'Athithi Devo Bhava' meaning 'Guest is God'.

Interviewer: Thank you very much, Mr. Ambassador for this informative and interesting interview.

Ambassador: I wish all the listeners of this programme good health, happiness and prosperity. I extend my congratulations to all people of Kazakhstan on the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence this year.

Pharmaceutical Companies from Kazakhstan Participate in iPHEX 2016

Pharmaceuticals Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) and the Ministry of Commerce & Industry jointly organized the 4th International Exhibition for Pharma and Healthcare 'iPHEX 2016' in Mumbai from April 27-29, 2016. The following companies from Kazakhstan participated in the exhibition: Altes Pharma, Tetra Pharm LLC, Kazakh Research Institute of Oncology and Radiology, Amanat Pharma, Dolce LLP, LLC Coral Med Kazakhstan, SEO Alibaeyva AS, Grindex LLP and Optonic LLP. The Pharmexcil sponsored the visit of four of these companies under its market expansion scheme.

More than 290 Indian and 67 international pharma companies participated in the exhibition. Over 600 overseas business visitors from over 100 countries, including regulators, senior health officials and key representatives from NGOs participated in iPHEX 2016.

India has emerged as a reliable source for quality and affordable medicines. Over 55 per cent of India's export is to highly regulated markets. Over the years, Indian pharma has earned a high reputation, especially, in generics in global marketplace. India supplies 20 per cent of global generic medicines in terms of volume, making it the largest provider of generic medicines globally. The country's pharma exports stood at Rs. 96,000 crore (US\$ 14.5 billion) in the year 2014-15 (April 2014 to March 2015).



Applications Invited Under AYUSH Scholarship Scheme

Government of India has announced scholarships for students interested in pursuing Under Graduate, Post Graduate and Ph.D. education in Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Sidha and Homeopathy in Universities/Educational Institutions in India under "Ayush Scholarship Scheme (NON-BIMSTEC)" for the academic session 2016-17 through Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR).

The scholarship will cover expenditure on air fare, tuition fee, living allowance, house rent, etc. The details of the courses including eligibility conditions are available at : <http://indembastana.in/docs/Details%20of%20AYUSH%20Scholarship%20Scheme.pdf>.

Interested students may send six copies of the application mentioning the subject, course and the University to which the admission is sought, to the Director, Indian Cultural Centre, Embassy of India, House No.2, Zhyly Oi Street, Karaotkel Microdistrict No.2, Yesil Area, Astana-Z05F7E1 [Tel. 8-7172- 449884 Telefax: 449788, E-mail: diriccastana94@yahoo.com] by 1st June, 2016. The application form is available at : <http://www.iccr.gov.in/content/download-forms>.

While submitting the applications, the students may pay due attention to the specific admission criteria laid down by various Universities and ensure that they submit all relevant documentation. The candidates are expected to have adequate knowledge of English language to avail the scholarship.



India-Top FDI Destination in 2015

India emerged as the top destination for Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in the world by attracting US\$ 63 billion worth of FDI projects in 2015. fDi Intelligence, a division of the Financial Times Ltd, reported that India replaced China as the top destination for FDI by capital investment following a year of high-value project announcements specifically across coal, oil and natural gas and renewable energy sectors. Currently 98 per cent of FDI into India comes through automatic route.



According to fDi Intelligence, the motive cited by companies investing in India is the growth potential of domestic market. The report specifies that the Make in India campaign and the resultant boost in FDI resulted in a whopping increase in FDI job creation from 116,000 new jobs in 2013 to 225,000 in 2015 - the highest number in the world. It underscored that India is emerging as a key destination for renewable energy projects, helped by a wider government policy of incentives, infrastructure and programmes designed to attract investment. India topped the rankings in 2015 with US\$ 11.8 billion of announced FDI in the renewable energy sector.

India to Grow at 7.6% in FY 2016-17 : UNESCAP

United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) said that India's economy is expected to grow by 7.6 per cent in 2016-17, largely on the back of urban household spending amid steady employment growth and low inflation, and edge upwards to 7.8 per cent in 2017-18. It added that a good monsoon could provide a fillip to growth, pushing gross domestic product growth to 7.8 per cent in 2016-17 itself.

"The Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2016" launched by the UNESCAP on 28th April, 2016 states that with rural demand continuing to be weak after two years of back-to-back droughts, urban demand is expected to do the heavy lifting. The report expects the urban consumption to get a boost with the government accepting the Seventh Pay Commission recommendations on revision of pay and allowances of government employees.

The UNESCAP noted the progress made in reforming fiscal policy such as rationalisation of fuel price subsidies and opined that the overall strength of domestic demand would depend on the progress made in implementing structural reforms and how rapidly large scale stalled infrastructure projects are unlocked.



ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SURVEY
OF ASIA AND THE PACIFIC 2016
Nurturing productivity for inclusive growth
and sustainable development



India Sets Up Regional Navigation Satellite System

Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)'s Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV-C33) successfully launched IRNSS-1G, the seventh and final in the series of navigation satellites of the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), into a Sub-Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (Sub-GTO) from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, India on 28th April, 2016. PSLV-C33 was the thirty fourth consecutively successful mission of PSLV proving its reliability and versatility.

IRNSS is an independent regional navigation satellite system designed to provide position information in the Indian region and 1,500 km around Indian mainland. The first six satellites of the IRNSS were launched between July, 2013 and March, 2016 and are functioning satisfactorily from their designated orbital positions. Space Segment consists of seven satellites - three satellites in GEO stationary orbit (GEO) and four satellites in Geo Synchronous Orbit (GSO) - with inclination of 29° to the equatorial plane. All the satellites would be visible at all times in the Indian region.

The ground stations responsible for generation and transmission of navigation parameters, satellite ranging and monitoring, etc., have been established in eighteen locations across the country with a full-fledged ground control centre in Bengaluru.

The launch of IRNSS-1G is an important landmark in India's space programme with India joining a group of five nations having their own regional satellite navigation system. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi declared that this navigation system will be known as NAVIC - "Navigation with Indian Constellation." Explaining the name NAVIC, he said that the system is dedicated to India's mariners and fishermen who have been navigating for hundreds of years using the sun and stars as waypoints and it has been named after them, the 'naviks' (mariners). NAVIC would offer services such as terrestrial and marine navigation, disaster management, vehicle tracking and fleet management, navigation aide for hikers and travellers, and visual and voice navigation for drivers.



Export Rule Eased for Medical Device Makers

The government of India increased the validity of free sale certificates required by domestic medical device manufacturers for exports from two years to the validity of manufacturing licence.

The manufacturers need to register with the foreign country and obtain its regulatory approval to export medical devices. The foreign country authorities generally ask for a free sale certificate to allow imports. The free sale certificates valid for two years were issued to medical device manufacturers by state licensing authorities, which used to restrict registration in overseas countries and added to re-registration costs of overseas importers. In order to promote exports, the government has decided to issue the free sale certificates co-terminus with the manufacturing licence.



The notification on validity of free sale certificate will apply to medical devices that are classified as drugs under the provisions of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940. According to Association of Indian Medical Device Industry, medical device exports from India stood at US\$1.1 billion in 2015.

Facility for Registration as Overseas Indian Electors Introduced

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has created a facility for online electoral registration of Non-Resident Indians (NRI) at National Voters' Service Portal of ECI. Any citizen of India whose name is not included in the electoral roll, and who has not acquired the citizenship of any other country and is away from his place of ordinary residence in India owing to his employment, education or otherwise outside India (whether temporarily or not) is entitled to have his name registered in the electoral roll in the constituency in which his place of residence in India as mentioned in his passport is located.



An eligible NRI may have his name registered in the electoral roll by filing an application in Form 6A (Link : <http://indembastana.in/docs/Form-6A.pdf>) in person before the Electoral Registration Officer concerned along with requisite documents or by sending the application to him by post or by filing it online at the National Voters' Service Portal [<http://www.nvsp.in/>]. FAQs for registering as an overseas (NRI) elector are available at : <http://indembastana.in/docs/FAQs.pdf>.

All eligible Indian citizens living in Kazakhstan may avail this facility to register themselves in the electoral rolls of their respective constituencies.

Kumbh Mela in Ujjain Begins

Simhasth Kumbh Mahaparv, one of the four Kumbh Melas, began in the ancient city of Ujjain on 22nd April, 2016. About 50 million pilgrims from all walks of life are expected to join and take holy dip in Shipra river during this month-long Kumbh Mela. The Kumbh Melas, which are the world's largest religious gatherings, are held in the cities of Allahabad, Haridwar, Nasik and Ujjain once in 12 years by rotation where Hindus gather to bathe in the confluence of Ganges, Yamuna and mythical Saraswati, the Ganges, the Godawari and the Shipra respectively. The holy dip taken in these sacred rivers on auspicious days at a defined time is believed to purify the soul and overcome all sins.

The Simhasth Kumbh Mahaparv in Ujjain includes traditional "Peshwai" (Procession) by all 13 akharas of saints and seers. The procession would look magnificent with heads of akharas being seated on silver thrones fitted on elephants amidst armed sadhus on horses and camels, followed by hermits and devotees. The Kumbh Mela shows the diversity and unity of rich Indian culture.

Kumbh Melas in ancient India had the tradition of *shastrarth* or debate and discussions by socially influential people and dharma gurus on major issues confronting the society and how to deal with them. In keeping with the ancient tradition, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will unveil Simhastha Declaration on May 14, which will be a prescription on how "a duty-centred system, which was the origin of Indian philosophy of life, has become most relevant today". It will be the essence of a year-long exercise of seminars and conferences on religion, spirituality and its relationship with science, climate change and deep ecology to finally expound on how this can be leveraged for social and environmental challenges.



Incredible India Destination : Ujjain

The ancient city of Ujjain in the State of Madhya Pradesh lies on the banks of sacred river Shipra. Legend has it that Ujjain is one of the Saptapuris or the seven holy cities of India that grant moksha or liberation from the cycle of birth and death. Ujjain, the city of temples, hosts Simhasth Kumbh Mela every 12 years.

Mahakaleshwar temple, Ram Ghat, Pir Matsyendranath, Sandipani Ashram, Kalidasa Academy, Bade Ganeshji ka Mandir, Chintaman Ganesh temple and Mangalnath temple are popular tourist attractions in Ujjain.

Mahakaleshwar temple, whose shikhara soars into the skies, evokes primordial awe and reverence with its majesty. The presiding deity of time, Shiva, in all his splendour reigns eternal in Ujjain. Ram Ghat is the most ancient bathing ghat in connection with the Kumbh celebrations in Ujjain.

Pir Matsyendranath is an attractive spot on the banks of the Shipra. It is dedicated to the memory of one of the greatest leaders of the Natha sect of Saivism-Matsyendranath. This ancient site is venerated by the followers of Natha sect as well as Muslims. Excavations at this site yielded antiquities, which date back to the 6th and 7th century BC.

Sandipani Ashram is believed to be the place where Lord Krishna and his childhood friend, Sudama received regular instruction, which shows that ancient Ujjain enjoyed the reputation of being a great seat of learning as early as the Mahabharata period. Kalidasa Academy is a multi-disciplinary institution set up in the memory of great poet dramatist-Kalidasa.

Bade Ganeshji ka Mandir enshrines a huge artistic sculpture of Ganesh, the son of Shiva. An idol of this size and beauty is rarely to be found. Chintaman Ganesh temple is built across the Shipra on the Fatehabad railway line. The Ganesh idol enshrined there is supposed to be swayambhu, born of itself. The temple itself is believed to be of considerable antiquity. The deity is traditionally known as Chintaharan Ganesh meaning the assurer of freedom from worldly anxieties.

Mangalnath temple, situated away from the city, looks upon a vast expanse of the Shipra waters and fills the onlooker with an indescribable sense of peace.

Harsiddhi temple, Kal Bhairava temple, Gadkalika temple, Gopal Mandir, Navagraha Mandir, Vikram Kirti Mandir, Vedha Shala (Observatory), Kaliadeh Palace, Durgadas Ki Chhatri and Bhartrihari Caves are other major tourist attractions in Ujjain.



Ram Ghat



Pir Matsyendranath



Sandipani Ashram



Harsiddhi Temple



Mahakaleshwar Temple



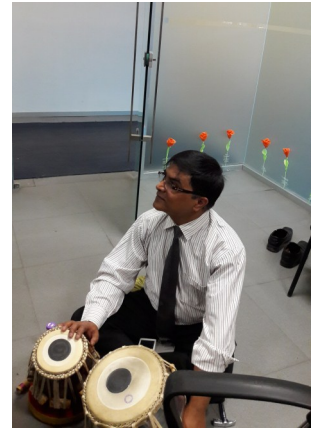
Veda Shala (Observatory)

PHOTO FEATURE

Ambassador Gives Live Interview to Kazakh Radio

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India Tourism Office, Frankfurt Participates in 16th Kazakhstan International Tourism Fair, Almaty

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