



सत्यमेव जयते

Embassy of India ASTANA

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Prime Minister Attends SCO Summit in Tashkent

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi visited Uzbekistan to attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit (SCO) on June 23-24, 2016. He was received by Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Mr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev on his arrival in Tashkent.

Prime Minister Modi addressed the SCO Summit on June 24, 2016. He said that the acceptance of India as a full member of the SCO at the Ufa Summit last year was a landmark in India's engagement with SCO. He expressed gratitude to the SCO member States and their leaders for their overwhelming support for India's membership of the SCO.

He underscored that India has centuries old linkages with the region and it is not just connected by geography, but also by culture, cuisine and commerce, which form the bed rock of India's modern day relationships with Russia, China and the countries of Central Asia. He mentioned that with India joining the SCO, the organization would represent forty percent of humanity and over a billion youth.

He said that India would benefit from SCO's strengths in energy, natural resources and industry and in turn, India's strong economy and its vast market could drive economic growth in the SCO region. He emphasized that India's capacities in trade, investments, information and communication technology, Space, S&T, agriculture, healthcare, and small and medium scale industry can bring widespread economic benefit to the SCO countries. He suggested that India and other SCO members can partner to develop human resources and institutional capacities in the region.

He noted that interdependent world of twenty-first century is full of economic opportunities, but it also faces geo-political complexities and security challenges. He stressed that while connectivity among the countries of the region is crucial to economic prosperity, the region also needs to nurture strong rail, road and air links with the rest of the world. He reaffirmed that India will be a productive partner in building strong trade, transport, energy, digital and people to people links within SCO. He said that India's decision to join the international North South Transport Corridor, the Chabahar Agreement and Ashgabat Agreement reflects this desire and intent.

He emphasized that India's membership of SCO would contribute to region's prosperity and strengthen its security. He expressed the belief that the SCO partnership would protect the societies of member states from the threat of radical ideologies of hate, violence and terror.

Prime Minister Modi said that India looks forward to attending the SCO meeting in Astana next year as equal partner. He wished success to Kazakhstan in its chairmanship of SCO in 2017.

India signed a base document called Memorandum of Obligations, which would formalise the process of India's membership of SCO.

Prime Minister Modi held bilateral meetings with President of Uzbekistan Mr. Islom Karimov, President of China Mr. Xi Jinping, President of Belarus Mr. Alexander Lukashenko, President of Tajikistan Mr. Emomali Rahmon and President of Russia Mr. Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the summit.

Prime Minister Modi offered floral tributes at the bust of former Prime Minister Late Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri and interacted with the kids at Shastri Street in Tashkent on June 24, 2016.



Prime Minister attends SCO Summit



Group Photo of SCO leaders

President Visits Namibia

President Shri Pranab Mukherjee paid a State Visit to Namibia from June 15-17, 2016. He met President Dr. Hage G. Geingob on June 16. They exchanged views on bilateral, regional and multilateral issues of mutual interest. They underscored the unwavering bonds of friendship and solidarity, underpinned by a shared history of struggle against colonialism and the growing strategic partnership, multifaceted cooperation and vibrant people to people contacts existing between the two countries.



The two leaders discussed a diverse range of subjects including trade, agriculture, health, mining, energy, finance, investment, infrastructure, ICT, education, culture, UN reforms, terrorism, climate change and sustainable development, and decided to further intensify cooperation in all these areas. They agreed to work together to ensure better utilization of tele-education and tele-medicine facilities installed in Namibia under the Pan Africa E-Network project. President Geingob assured that Namibia would explore ways to supply uranium to India and it was agreed that a technical team from both sides would meet at the earliest to discuss the way forward. President Mukherjee announced an increase of ITEC slots from 125 to 200 a year, a grant of US\$ 20,000 for the Indira Gandhi Maternity Clinic in Okahao to meet some of its immediate equipment needs, assistance of 1000 tonnes of rice to mitigate drought situation and 100 tonnes of essential medicines as grant-in-aid over the next three years to Namibia.

President Mukherjee addressed the Joint Session of Namibian Parliament. He said that the India-Namibia relationship has been built on the firm foundation of mutual trust and understanding. He recollected that India was among the first nations to raise the question of Namibian independence in the UN and the first ever SWAPO Embassy abroad was established in New Delhi in 1986, a move that started the chain of diplomatic recognition by other countries and the inevitability of Namibia's independence. He commended that Namibia's commitment to democracy and the success of its national reconciliation programme has made it a role model for Africa.

In a banquet hosted by President Geingob, President Mukherjee said that Africa and India are centers of gravity in today's globalised world and they have a responsibility to work together for peace, security and sustainable development in the two continents. Founding President of Namibia Dr. Sam Nujoma and Former President Dr. Hifikepunye Pohamba paid courtesy calls on President Mukherjee.

President Mukherjee addressed the students and faculty members of Namibia University of Science and Technology on June 17. He highlighted India's achievements in the field of education, economy, agriculture and science & technology. He called upon students to create a vibrant new landscape of innovation and technological development in Namibia. He addressed the Indian community at a reception organized in his honour by the Indian High Commissioner. He visited the Independence Memorial Museum, the Heroes' Acre, where he laid a wreath in honour of Namibia's Heroes, and Okapuka Ranch (Wildlife Park).

Two MOUs were signed during the visit on establishment of a Centre of Excellence in Information Technology in Namibia; and cooperation between Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad and Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management (NIPAM).

Duraiappah Stadium in Jaffna Dedicated to the People of Sri Lanka

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and President of Sri Lanka Mr. Maithripala Sirisena jointly dedicated the newly renovated Duraiappah Stadium in Jaffna to the people of Sri Lanka on June 18, 2016. President Sirisena was present at the stadium in Jaffna, while Prime Minister Modi joined the event through video-conferencing from New Delhi.



Prime Minister Modi stated that the Durraiappah Stadium is not just brick and mortar, but it is a symbol of optimism and economic development and an arena for a prosperous and healthy future for Jaffna's youth. He said that it demonstrates the people of Sri Lanka's determination to shed the legacy of violence and pursue the path of economic progress, its foundations are supported by their courage and great sacrifices and its successful completion is a signal that they have left the past behind and are looking to the promise of a prosperous future. He said that India strongly believes that its economic growth must drive and bring benefit to its neighbours and Durraiappah Stadium embodies the spirit of cooperation between the two countries. He said that India's desire is to see an economically prosperous Sri Lanka where unity and integrity; peace, harmony and security; and equal opportunity and dignity prevail throughout the country among all its people.

The stadium being in disuse since 1997 has been renovated by the Government of India at a cost of over Rs. 7 crore (US\$ 1 million). Named in honour of former Mayor of Jaffna, the late Alfred Thambirajah Duraiappah, the stadium has a seating capacity of 1850. It will provide necessary infrastructure to promote sports and recreational activities, and assist the overall development of the youth of the Northern Province in Sri Lanka.

Prime Minister of Thailand Visits India

Prime Minister of Thailand General Prayut Chan-o-cha paid a State Visit to India from June 16-18, 2016. He met Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi in New Delhi on June 17. The two leaders reviewed the full range of bilateral engagement from culture to commerce, closer contacts between the people of two countries, counter-terrorism, defence and security.



Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha invited Indian investments to Thailand under the cluster development policy, which is a newly-initiated program aimed at enhancing investment in focused areas. Under the policy, the two countries agreed to explore opportunities for collaboration in various mutually beneficial sectors including IT, pharmaceutical, automotive parts, chemical products, machinery and parts, bio-technology and R&D. Prime Minister Modi announced that Double Entry Visa facility would soon be put in place for Thai tourists arriving in India with an e-Visa to enable them to visit Buddhist sites in both India and Nepal. He offered Thailand indigenously developed GPS Aided Geo Augmented Navigation or GAGAN services, which provides advanced navigation and location assistance and information facilities in the Aviation, Maritime and other domains.

The two leaders recognized that smooth flow of goods, services, capital and human resources between the two economies needs a strong network of air, land and sea links and therefore, prioritized completion of India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral highway and early signing of the Motor Vehicles Agreement among the three countries. They agreed to further deepen the security engagement in the fields of cyber security, narcotics, transnational economic offenses and human trafficking. Recognizing that education is another important area of cooperation, the two leaders agreed to work together towards mutual recognition of degrees, research collaborations and training of teachers. They agreed to cooperate in the area of Skill Development with particular focus on imparting skills training to the people from North East India in Thailand. They welcomed the training of Thai officers by India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) in cybercrime investigation and computer forensics.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha called on Vice President Shri M. Hamid Ansari. He delivered a keynote address at the business event hosted by FICCI, CII and ASSOCHAM on 17 June. The India Thailand Business Forum held its first meeting during the visit and conveyed its recommendations to expand and deepen business and investment opportunities between the two countries. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha travelled to Bodh Gaya in the state of Bihar where he visited Mahabodhi Temple and Wat Thai Monastery on 18th June.

Two Agreements/MOUs were signed during the visit on Executive Programme of Cultural Exchange (Extension of CEP) for 2016-2019 and cooperation between Nagaland University, India and Chiang Mai University, Thailand.

India Joins MTCR

India joined the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) as its 35th member on June 27, 2016. The MTCR welcomed India into the regime, convinced that its membership would strengthen international efforts to prevent proliferation of delivery systems (ballistic missiles or unmanned aircraft) capable of delivering weapons of mass destruction. The MTCR membership gives India access to restricted high-end technologies for developing its cryogenic rocket engines in order to further its space exploration. It will also ensure access to high-end missile technology and will enable the country to sell indigenous BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles internationally.



Foreign Secretary Dr. S. Jaishankar received the MTCR membership papers from Envoys of France, the Netherlands and Luxembourg in New Delhi. India thanked each of the 34 MTCR partners for their support for India's membership. The MTCR membership is seen as a step forward in India's recognition as a legitimate nuclear power after it conducted nuclear tests in 1998.

India Launches 20 Satellites by a Single Rocket

Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO)'s PSLV-C34 (Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle) successfully launched a Cartosat-2 series Satellite and 19 co-passenger Satellites from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota on June 22, 2016. It was the third largest number of satellites ever launched in a single flight by any country in the world. After a flight of 16 minutes and 30 seconds, the satellites achieved a polar Sun Synchronous Orbit of 508 km inclined at an angle of 97.5 degree to the equator and in the succeeding 10 minutes, all the 20 satellites successfully separated from the PSLV in a predetermined sequence.

Of the 19 co-passenger satellites, two were built with the involvement of students from Sathyabama University, Chennai and College of Engineering, Pune and the remaining 17 belonged to international customers: Canada (2), Germany (1), Indonesia (1) and the United States (13). The images received from Cartosat-2, will be useful in providing scene-specific spot imagery that can be used for detailed mapping and other cartographic applications as well as applications in Land Information System (LIS) and Geographical Information System (GIS).



Kazakhstan Wins UN Security Council Election

Kazakhstan won the election for non-permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) for 2017-18. It defeated Thailand by a vote of 138 to 55 for the seat from Asian-Pacific group on June 28, 2016.

President Nazarbayev addressed the people of Kazakhstan on June 29 and described the election of Kazakhstan as a non-permanent member of the UNSC as a historical achievement. He stated that it was the success of both Kazakhstan and entire Central Asian region, which has never been represented in the Council supervising international peace and security. He said that Kazakhstan would make a weighty contribution to the search for resolution of global issues. He emphasized that people of Kazakhstan need a secure world and it would make use of this opportunity to make the future more confident and favorable.

He asserted that Kazakhstan would draw the attention of the world community to its initiatives aimed at building the world free of nuclear weapons, virus of wars and conflicts and would work on achievement of this goal by the UN's 100th anniversary in 2045. He reaffirmed that Kazakhstan would promote anti-terrorist initiatives outlined by him at the 70th session of the UN General Assembly in 2015. He highlighted that Kazakhstan would boost resolution of water, energy and food security issues.

President Nazarbayev expressed gratitude to all the countries which backed the candidacy of Kazakhstan and expressed confidence that the country would fulfill its mission as part of its membership in the UNSC. He said that it would be one more historical step towards accession of Kazakhstan to the club of most developed countries of the world and to building a secure and prosperous state. He congratulated all Kazakhstanis on this important event coinciding with the 25th anniversary of the independence of the country.



The 2nd International Day of Yoga Celebrated in Kazakhstan

The Embassy celebrated the second International Day of Yoga in Astana on 19th June, 2016 at the iconic monument, Baiterek Tower. Ambassador Shri Harsh Jain welcomed the guests and read out Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's message to the participants:

"My dear friends from all over the world, it gives me great pleasure to address you as we prepare for the 2nd International Day of Yoga - this unique occasion that brings all of us together to celebrate the invaluable gift of India's ancient tradition. When I outlined a vision for an International Day of Yoga in September 2014 at the United Nations General Assembly, even I did not anticipate the enormous enthusiasm for the occasion from all corners of the world. Your support and participation last year, and once again now redeems our commitment to nurture and promote this ancient discipline, and reaffirms yoga as an exemplary manifestation of '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' - The world as one family.

I recall the iconic images from that momentous day last year. All the way from the Pacific Islands to Port of Spain, from Vladivostok to Vancouver and from Copenhagen to Cape Town, thousands gathered to unite the bodies and minds through the practice of Yoga. And the reverberations of their discipline found a natural home at the UN Headquarters in New York, where the journey had begun. I myself was fortunate to celebrate the event along with 36,000 of my fellow citizens and foreign guests in New Delhi. As so many of you have already discovered, Yoga is much more than a physical exercise - it enables us to access a new dimension of the self, even while providing a holistic approach to preventive healthcare and wellbeing. Yoga helps us to restore our balance and furnishes us with a much needed sense of clarity. And through its unifying power, we seek completeness, and at the same time, a oneness with the world. Today all of you are the Ambassadors of Yoga, taking forward India's ancient message to the world. I thank you for your commitment and welcome you as sisters and brothers of India's family".

Mr. Serik Zharasbayev, Deputy Chairman, Committee of Sports, Ministry of Culture and Sports represented the Government of Kazakhstan. He appreciated the assembly of large number of participants including elderly people for the yoga session. He commented that the initiative of the Embassy to organize such a grand event would attract more people towards yoga and would help them lead a healthy lifestyle. Ambassador of South Africa Mr. Shirish Soni and Ambassador of Norway Mr. Ole Johan Bjornoy congratulated the participants.

Mr. Mansur Smagambetov read a message from Mr. Tolegen Mukhamejanov, Famous Poet, Music Composer and President of the International Association "Peace through Culture". Mr. Mukhamejanov mentioned in his message that though Yoga was born in India, it is now practiced all



Celebration of International Day of Yoga in Astana



Celebration of International Day of Yoga in Almaty

the world and recognized by the United Nations. He said that yoga is a system of self improvement and shows the methods of attaining physical perfection and comprehension of mysteries of own psyche. He emphasized that one experiences harmony between body and soul through yoga.

About 425 people attended the celebration. After the common yoga protocol, over 250 participants joined the "Sun Salutations (Surya Namaskar) - Marathon".

The 2nd International Day of Yoga in Almaty was celebrated at the Main Stadium of the Al-Farabi Kazakh National University on June 19, 2016. Mr. Kazhimkan Massimov, President of the Kazakhstan Association of Yoga spoke about the benefits of practising yoga. Head of the UN Department of Public Information Mr. Vlastimil Samek, First Vice-Rector of the University Mr. Mukhtambetkeli and President of InCham Mr. Seshadri Sundaram also spoke on the occasion. Mr. Naveen Kapur, Second Secretary at the Representative Office of the Embassy in Almaty read out the messages of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and External Affairs Minister Smt. Sushma Swaraj. Mr. Sandeep Jadhav and Dr. Jitendra conducted Common Yoga Protocol. It was followed by a day long celebration of different facets of yoga and Indian cultural performance. Around 300 people participated in the Common Yoga Protocol and about 600 people attended the day long celebration.

The Embassy of India in Astana in collaboration with Kazakhstan Academy of Yoga and Arcelor Mittal Co Ltd celebrated the 2nd International Day of Yoga in Karaganda City at the Central Park on June 26, 2016. The celebration commenced with a welcome speech by Swamy Akhileshvarananda Saraswati, Head of Kazakhstan Academy of Yoga followed by Common Yoga Protocol led by Dr. Brijesh Gupta, ICC Yoga instructor and demonstration of yogasanas by the students of Kazakhstan Academy of Yoga. The celebration was attended by over 400 yoga students, enthusiasts and public and nearly 200 participated in the Common Yoga Protocol.

The 2nd International Day of Yoga was celebrated by ONGC Videsh Ltd at the premises of Satypayev LLP Company in Atyrau and Kazakhstan Indian Students Association (KAISA) at the premises of Kazakhstan National Medical University, Almaty on June 21. Mr. Leskin, Director of Youth for Cultural and International Activities, Kazakhstan Medical University, Almaty attended the celebration.



Celebration of the 2nd International Day of Yoga in Karaganda



Celebration of the 2nd International Day of Yoga in Atyrau



Celebration of the 2nd International Day of Yoga by KAISA in Almaty

Kazakh Yoga Professionals Participate in ITEC Courses in Bengaluru

Ms. Diana Akhmediyeva, Yoga Instructor at Tribal Pro and Ms. Diana Nazarova, Yoga Instructor at Art Yoga Studio 'Allem' were selected for the course "Special Training Programme for Yoga Trainers" conducted by Svyasa (Swami Vivekananda Yoga Anusandhana Samsthana) Yoga University, Bengaluru from June 16 to July 13, 2016.

Ambassador Shri Harsh Jain met the candidates before they left for India.



Kazakh Yoga Professionals Attend a Conference on Yoga in New Delhi

As part of the celebration of the 2nd International Day of Yoga, Government of India organized an international conference on "Yoga for Body and Beyond" in New Delhi on June 22-23, 2016. Vice President Shri M. Hamid Ansari inaugurated the conference. He emphasized that yoga is "science, not dogma". He stated that the quest for complementary health approaches has acquired a following worldwide.

From Kazakhstan, Mr. Kazhimkan Massimov, General Director of the "Wellness Centre of Massimov" and President of the Kazakhstan Association of Yoga; Mr. Sunder Pandian, Yoga Instructor, Yoga Room, Astana; and Mr. Sandeep Jhadav, Yoga Instructor, Yoga Sanskar, Almaty participated in the conference.



Liberalized FDI Policy Regime Announced

The Government of India radically liberalized the FDI regime on June 20, 2016 with the objective of improving ease of doing business in the country leading to growth of investment, income generation and employment. The major FDI policy reforms undertaken by the government in the last two years resulted in increased FDI inflows at US\$ 55.46 billion in 2015-16, as against US\$ 36.04 billion during 2013-14. India has been rated as Number One FDI Investment Destination by several International Agencies. In order to attract far more foreign investment, the government has introduced a number of amendments in the FDI Policy on June 20, 2016 as detailed below:

WHAT THE CHANGES MEAN

Sector	Maximum FDI Allowed	Access to Technology	Other Details
Defence	100% FDI in defence via govt approval	49% for foreign entities under automatic route and beyond 49% on government approval on a case-by-case basis subject to access to state-of-the-art technology	Foreign defence firms can set up manufacturing facilities in India
Pharmaceuticals	74% FDI through automatic route in brownfield	100% FDI in brownfield through govt approval	More private equity deals in pharma as new regulation allows minority over FIPB approvals
Aviation	100% FDI for foreign entities	49% for foreign entities	Local airlines can attract more capital
Broadcasting	100% FDI for foreign entities	49% for foreign entities	More investment opportunities
Cable networks	100% FDI allowed via automatic route	100% FDI allowed, only 49% allowed via automatic route	No FDI expected till cross-media ownership cap removed
Direct to home (DTH)	100% FDI allowed via automatic route	100% FDI allowed, only 49% allowed via automatic route	
Included in the Sky (HITS)			

Source: Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion

100% FDI has been permitted under government approval route for trading, including through e-commerce, in respect of food products manufactured or produced in India. In defence sector, the requirement of "access to modern and state-of-art technology" for FDI above 49% has been changed to "access to modern technology or for other reasons". Moreover, FDI limit for defence sector has been made applicable to manufacturing of small arms and ammunitions.

In broadcasting carriage services, 100% FDI has been permitted under automatic route for Teleports (setting up of up-linking HUBS/ Teleports); Direct to Home (DTH); Cable Networks [Multi System operators (MSOs)]; Mobile TV and Headend-in-the Sky Broadcasting Service (HITS). In brownfield pharmaceuticals, FDI under automatic route has been allowed up to 74% and approval will be required only for FDI beyond 74%, as against entire FDI under approval route.

In civil aviation sector, with a view to aid modernization of existing airports and help ease the pressure on the existing airports, FDI in Brownfield Airport Projects under automatic route has been increased from 74% to 100%. FDI in Scheduled Air Transport Service/Domestic Scheduled Passenger Airline and regional Air Transport Service has been increased from 49% to 100% with FDI up to 49% permitted under automatic route and FDI beyond 49% through Government approval. For NRIs, 100% FDI will continue to be allowed under automatic route.

In Private Security Agencies, FDI up to 49% has been permitted under automatic route and FDI beyond 49% and up to 74% by government approval route as against only 49% FDI under government approval route. For establishment of branch office, liaison office or project office or any other place of business in India in Defence, Telecom, Private Security or Information and Broadcasting, approval of Reserve Bank of India or separate security clearance has been dispensed with in cases where FIPB approval or license/permission by the concerned Ministry/Regulator has been granted.

The requirement of "controlled conditions" for 100% FDI in Animal Husbandry, Pisciculture, Aquaculture and Apiculture has been done away with. The local sourcing norms have been relaxed up to three years and a relaxed sourcing regime would be in place for another five years for entities undertaking Single Brand Retail Trading of products having 'state-of-art' and 'cutting edge' technology. These changes have brought most of the sectors under automatic approval route except a small negative list and have made India the most open economy in the world for FDI.

India Gets Top Rating for Prudent Financial Market Reforms

India got top rating, along with nine other countries, for a robust financial market regulatory framework in compliance with global benchmarks. As per the third update to the Level 1 assessments of implementation monitoring of the Principles for Financial Market Infrastructures (PFMI) published by the Committee on Payments and Market Infrastructures (CPMI) of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) and the International Organization of Securities Commissions (IOSCO) on June 28, 2016, a total of 10 countries including India have secured the maximum score of '4' on a scale of one to four on all eight parameters. The score of '4' indicates that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) have all regulatory measures "fully in force".



The report looks into the status of each country's legal, regulatory or policy frameworks as on January 8, 2016. In Level-1, the countries are assessed whether they have completed the process of adopting the legislation, regulations and other policies that will enable them to implement the principles and responsibilities. Regulations for trade repositories, payment systems, central securities depositories and securities settlement systems were taken as parameters for the assessment.

Special Yoga Sessions at ICC

Ms. Aisha Mussinova conducted a special yoga session at Indian Cultural Centre, Astana on June 17, 2016. About 30 people participated in the yoga session.

Dr. Brijesh Gupta, Yoga Instructor, conducted special yoga sessions on Common Yoga Protocol on weekends in the run up to the 2nd International Day of Yoga.



Incredible India Destination : Rishikesh

Rishikesh, the 'place of the sages' is a celebrated spiritual town in the state of Uttarakhand. It is located on the banks of the Ganga, surrounded by Shivalik range of the Himalayas on three sides. It is said that the sage Raibhya Rishi did severe penance there and as a reward, God appeared to him in the form of Hrishikesh (Lord of Senses or Lord Vishnu), hence the name. It is the starting point for the Hindu Char Dham pilgrimage, including Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath, to seek spiritual salvation. Rishikesh, also called the Yoga capital of the world, has numerous ashrams, some of which are internationally recognized as centers of philosophical studies, yoga and meditation. An international yoga week is organized there every year between 2nd and 7th of February.

For the adventurous, Rishikesh is the place for starting their trekking expeditions and excursions towards the Himalayan peaks. Rishikesh is an important white water rafting centre. The Ganga with its upper tributaries (Alaknanda, Bhagirathi and various other smaller tributaries) is called the Queen of the white water rafting industry. Day trips are organised on the Ganga and or Multiple Day/Expedition runs on the Alaknanda and the Bhagirathi. Rishikesh is the best place to learn White Water Kayaking with good instructors and equipment as majority of the knowledge base in the white water scenarios is concentrated in Rishikesh and nearby reaches of 40 odd km upstream on the Ganges.

The climate in Rishikesh is continental type, but its location in the foothills gives it a pleasant weather throughout the year. One can visit Rishikesh any time of the year. Bharat Mandir, Lakshman Jhoola, Ram Jhoola and Shivanand Ashram are popular tourist attractions in Rishikesh.

Bharat Mandir, the oldest temple in Rishikesh, is dedicated to Bharat, the younger brother of Lord Rama. This 9th century temple has the deity of Lord Vishnu carved out of a single black stone popular as Saligram and is placed in the inner chambers of the temple.

Lakshman Jhoola located 5 km away from Rishikesh is a 450-foot long suspension bridge built in 1939 across the river Ganga. Named after Lord Ram's younger brother Lakshman, it has temples dotting its either side, including the famed Lakshman Temple at Tapovan. One noteworthy ashram is the 13-storeyed Kailashananda Ashram, with each storey being dedicated to a different deity.

Gita Bhavan near Lakshman Jhoola runs a free Ayurvedic dispensary. It houses striking paintings and statues of ancient mythological characters. Ram Jhoola is a suspension bridge, which provides an alternative to a boat ride from one bank of the Ganga to another.

Shivanand Ashram (The Divine Life Society), founded by Swami Shivanand, is renowned for its lectures on spiritual life, meditation and yoga classes. Swarga Ashram is a cluster of ashrams on the eastern bank of the Ganges. Most of the ashrams provide courses on yoga and spiritual studies.

Kaudiyala (38 km away from Rishikesh) is nestled amongst the dense forests on the Rishikesh-Badrinath route at an altitude of 480 m. It is a centre for adventure/water sports, particularly white water rafting. Garhwal Mandal Vikas Nigam Ltd (GMVN) conducts river rafting courses there. There is also ample opportunity to view wildlife in its natural habitat.

Triveni Ghat, Rishikund, Chandramauleshwara Temple, Pushkar Temple, Raghunath Temple, Shatrughan Temple, Venkateshwara Temple and various ashrams on the banks of the river Ganga are some of the other tourist attractions in Rishikesh.



Lakshman Jhoola



Ram Jhoola



Water Rafting



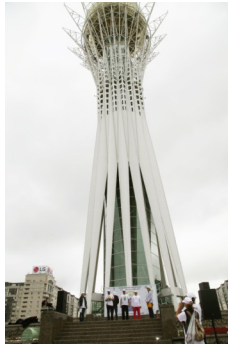
Trekking



Shivanand Ashram

PHOTO FEATURE

Celebration of the 2nd International Day of Yoga in Astana



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Celebration of the 2nd International Day of Yoga in Almaty



Celebration of the 2nd International Day of Yoga in Karaganda



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