

## India - Kazakhstan Relations: Bilateral Brief

### **1. Background**

I. Relations between India and Kazakhstan are ancient and historical, going back to more than 2000 years. There has been a constant and regular exchange in goods and, more importantly, exchange of ideas and cultural influences. The journey of Buddhism from India to Central Asia and Sufi ideas from Central Asia to India are two such examples.

### **2. Political relations**

I. India was one of the first countries to recognize the independence of Kazakhstan. Diplomatic relations were established on 22 February 1992. The Embassy of India was opened in Almaty in May 1992 and the Embassy of Kazakhstan in New Delhi in 1993. The capital of Kazakhstan was shifted from Almaty to Astana in 1997. Subsequently, the Embassy of India opened its Representative Office in Astana on 15 September 2003. The Embassy moved to Astana in November 2007 and Representative Office to Almaty.

II. The first PM of India Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru accompanied by daughter Indira Gandhi visited Almaty in 1955. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan visited Kazakhstan in 1956 in his capacity as Vice President.

III. The first President Nursultan Nazarbayev visited India in February 1992. Thereafter, he has visited India in 1993 (transit visit), 1996, 2002 and 2009. He was the Chief Guest at the Republic Day parade in New Delhi on 26 January 2009. India and Kazakhstan bilateral relations were enhanced to **strategic partnership** during this visit. **President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev participated in the First India-Central Asia Summit in virtual format hosted by India on 27 January 2022**, which coincided with the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Central Asian countries.

IV. Prime Minister of India Shri PV Narsimha Rao visited Kazakhstan in 1993 and Prime Ministers Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee in June 2002, Dr.

Manmohan Singh in April 2011 and **Shri Narendra Modi in July 2015 (bilateral visit)**, during which Param Bilim Supercomputer was gifted to Kazakhstan. Vice-Presidents of India Shri K.R. Narayanan and Shri Hamid Ansari visited Kazakhstan in 1996 and 2008 respectively.

V. Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi participated in the 17<sup>th</sup> SCO Summit in Astana on 8-9 June 2017. India was admitted as a full member of the SCO during the Summit. **Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi chaired the virtual SCO Council of Heads of State Summit on 04 July 2023 under the Indian Chairmanship.**

**VI. Other Recent Ministerial Visits from India to Kazakhstan:**

<b>Name of visiting dignitary to India</b>	<b>Period of visit</b>	<b>Nature of Visit</b>
Gen (Retd) Dr. V.K. Singh, MOS, MEA	Dec 14-15, 2014	To attend SCO Heads of Govt. Meeting in Astana
Shri Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Skill Development and Entrepreneurship	Sep 19-20, 2017	To attend Inter-Governmental Commission Meeting
Shri M.J. Akbar, MOS, MEA	Nov 16-17, 2017	Bilateral
Smt. Sushma Swaraj, EAM	Aug 2-3, 2018	Bilateral
Smt. Nirmala Seetharaman, Defence Minister	October 2-4, 2018	Bilateral
Dr Satya Pal Singh, MoS Ministry of Human Resources and Development	October 15-18, 2018	To attend 7 <sup>th</sup> SCO Meeting of Education Ministers
Shri J. P. Nadda, Minister of Health and Family Welfare	October 25-28, 2018	To attend Global Conference on

		Primary Healthcare in Astana
Shri Harivansh Narayan Singh, Deputy Chairman Rajyasabha	September 23-24, 2019	4 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of Eurasian Countries' Parliament
Shri V. Muraleedharan, MoS for External Affairs and MoS for Parliamentary Affairs	November 11-12, 2019	To attend Astana Club Meeting
Dr. S. Jaishankar, EAM	October 11-12, 2021	To attend 6 <sup>th</sup> Meeting of Ministers of Foreign affairs of CICA
Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi	June 12-14, 2022	Bilateral
Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi (for 6 <sup>th</sup> CICA Summit)	October 12-14, 2022	To attend 6 <sup>th</sup> CICA Heads of State Summit as PM's Special Envoy
Dr. S. Jaishankar, EAM	July 3-4, 2024.	To participated in the SCO Council of Heads of State Summit

VII. **EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Kazakhstan on 11-12 October 2021 and participated in the 6th Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA).** He called on President Tokayev and conveyed greetings from PM Modi and his invitation to visit India in 2022. He discussed bilateral relations and conveyed India's proposal on the mutual recognition of Covid vaccination certificates. MoS Meenakashi Lekhi participated in the 6<sup>th</sup> CICA Summit on 13 October 2022 in Astana as the Prime Minister's Special Envoy.

VIII. EAM participated in the 20<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Council of Heads of Government of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) chaired by

Kazakh Prime Minister Askar Mamin via videoconference on 25 November 2021.

IX. EAM met Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan on 24 September 2019 in New York on the sidelines of UNGA. On 10 September 2020 also, EAM met him on the sidelines the SCO Meeting of Foreign Ministers in Moscow. EAM again met the Kazakh DPM and FM Tileuberdi (i) on 30 March 2021 in Dushanbe, on the sidelines of 9<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference of Heart of Asia-Istanbul Process (ii) on 16 July 2021 in Tashkent, on the sidelines of Connectivity Conference (International Conference "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity, Challenges and Opportunities"). (iii) on 19 Dec 2021 in New-Delhi on the sidelines of 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Foreign Ministers of the India – Central Asia Dialogue (iv) on 29 July 2022 on the sidelines of the meeting of the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.

X. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tileuberdi visited New Delhi on 18-21 December 2021 to participate in the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of India-Central Asia Dialogue. On the sidelines, they held bilateral meeting on 19 December 2021.

**XI. On May 05, 2023, EAM Dr Jaishankar held a bilateral meeting with Deputy Prime Minister - Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr Murat Nurtleu on the sidelines of SCO Council of Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Goa, India.**

XII. On 17 November 2023, Deputy Prime Minister - Minister of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan Murat Nurtleu took part in a virtual panel session of the Ministerial meeting on the theme "India and the Global South: Joint development for a Better Future", which took place within the framework of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Summit "The Voice of the Global South".

XIII. On 22 May 2024, Secretary (ER) Shri Dammu Ravi participated in the SCO Council of Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Astana.

XIV. On 28 October 2020, the 19<sup>th</sup> meeting of Ministers of External Trade and Economy of the SCO member States was held in virtual format. The Indian side delegation was led by Shri Piyush Goyal, Minister for Commerce and Industry and the Kazakh delegation was led by Mr. Ruslan Dalenov, Minister of National Economy of Kazakhstan.

XV. The 19th Summit of SCO Council of Heads of Government was held on 30 November 2020 in video-conference format in which Vice President of India Shri Venkaiah Naidu Chaired the meeting of the SCO Council of Heads of Government hosted by India and the Kazakh delegation was led by Mr. Askar Mamin, Prime Minister of Kazakhstan.

XVI. On 4 September 2020, Raksha Manti Shri Rajnath Singh met Defence Minister of Kazakhstan Lt. Gen. Nurlan Yermekbayev, on the sidelines of joint meeting of the Defence Ministers of SCO, CIS and CSTO members in Moscow. Defence Minister of Kazakhstan Lt. Gen. Nurlan Yermekbayev visited India on 7-10 April 2021 and met with RM Rajnath Singh. Kazakhstan's National Security Committee Chairman Karim Massimov, who was also former PM of Kazakhstan visited India and participated in the Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan on 10 November 2021. He met PM Modi along with NSAs and Security Council Chiefs of other countries. A meeting between RM Rajnath Singh and Col Gen Ruslan Zhaksylykov, Defence Minister of Kazakhstan was held on 23 August 2022, on sidelines of SCO Defence Ministers meeting at Tashkent.

XVII. Mr. Askar Zhumagaliyev, Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan visited India on 20-22 September, 2018. H.E. Mr. Kanat Bozymbayev, Minister of Energy accompanied by Mr. Yermek Kosherbayev, Deputy Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan visited India to attend Petrotech-2019 on 10-12 February held in New Delhi. Mr. Yuri Ilyin, Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs of Kazakhstan visited India to attend the 10<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Heads of Officers of the SCO member states on joint urban earthquake search and rescue exercise held on 4-7 November, 2019 in New Delhi. Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Mr. Askar Mamin participated in the 19th Summit of SCO Council of Heads of Government (hosted by India), held on 30 November 2020, in virtual format.

XVIII. Mr. Bakyt Sultanov, Deputy Prime Minister-Minister of Trade and Integration visited India on 2-4 June 2022 to Co-Chair the India-Kazakhstan Intergovernmental Commission, which was held on 03 June, 2022.

### **3. Bilateral Mechanisms**

**I. Foreign Office Consultations (FOC)** at the level of Deputy Foreign Ministers/Secretary (West) are held to discuss the entire range of bilateral,

regional and international issues of mutual interest. The 7<sup>th</sup> round of FOC was held in November 2020 through DVC [Digital Video Conference]. The Indian side was led by Shri Vikas Swarup, Secretary (West) and the Kazakh side was led by Mr Shakhmat Nuryshev, First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan. **The last (8<sup>th</sup> round) of FOC was conducted in physical form in New Delhi on 13 February 2023.** The Indian side was led by the Secretary (West) Shri Sanjay Verma and the Kazakh side was led by the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan Mr Kanat Tumyshev.

#### **4. India-Central Asia Dialogue**

I. Kazakhstan is also part of the India-Central Asia Dialogue, the first meeting of which was held in Samarkand on 12-13<sup>th</sup> January 2019. The 1<sup>st</sup> India-Central Asia Business Council Meeting, under this dialogue was organized by FICCI, on 6 February, 2020 in New Delhi. On 28 October 2020 the 2<sup>nd</sup> India-Central Asia Dialogue was held in digital video conference format. From Indian side the delegation was led by Dr. S Jaishankar, External Affairs Minister in the event, from Kazakh side the delegation was led by H.E. Mr. Mukhtar Tileuberdi, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan in the dialogue. The 2<sup>nd</sup> India-Central Asia Business Council meeting was held on 28 October 2020 through video conference organized by FICCI.

**II. The 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of India-Central Asia Dialogue was held on 18-19 December 2021 in New Delhi.** Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan Mukhtar Tileuberdi participated in this meeting and held bilateral talks with EAM Dr S Jaishankar. He, along with Central Asian FMs, met PM Modi on 20 December.

#### **5. India-Central Asia Summit**

I. The first ever India-Central Asia Summit at the level of leaders was held on 27 January 2022 **in virtual format.** President of Kazakhstan participated in it. President Tokayev stressed on further development of trade and economic cooperation, transport and logistics sector and increasing the

volume of mutual investments in the areas of mining and metallurgical complex, agriculture, green energy, healthcare and the pharmaceutical sector, artificial intelligence, Big Data, the Internet of things, online commerce and cyber-security and creation of laboratories in Kazakhstan in the field of telecommunications and electronics industry and training of highly qualified IT specialists. He proposed to open an engineering office and an information technology school for Central Asia with Indian IT giants. The situation in Afghanistan was also discussed.

II. FICCI organized an India-CA virtual conference on Energy on 24 August 2022.

III. A three member delegation led by Mr Gizat Nurdauletov, Secretary of the Security Council of Kazakhstan, visited New Delhi and Agra from 05 to 07 December 2022 for the inaugural India-Central Asia Meeting of Secretaries of Security Councils / NSAs.

IV. Two 20 member delegations from Kazakhstan participated in the 100 member Youth Delegation Program organized by Ministry of Sports and Youth Affairs under the aegis of India-Central Asia Summit from 17-23 November 2022 and 06-12 March 2024.

V. The First Meeting of the JWG on Afghanistan was held in New-Delhi on 07 March 2023. The Kazakh delegation was led by Ambassador-at-Large of the MFA Talgat Kaliyev

VI. On 03 April, Minister of Culture, Tourism and Development of North Eastern Region Shri G. Kishan Reddy hosted the first India-Central Asia Culture Ministers' Meeting through video conferencing. From Kazakh side, the Minister of Culture and Sports Askhat Oralov participated.

VII. The 1st meeting of India-Central Asia JWG on Chabahar port was held in Mumbai on 12-13 April 2023. In the meeting, Kazakhstan invited India to be the part of North South Roadmap.

## **6. Cooperation in UN and Multilateral fora**

I. India and Kazakhstan actively cooperate under the aegis of Multilateral Fora including CICA, SCO and the UN organizations. India has been a consistent supporter of Kazakhstan's initiative on Conference on Interaction

and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia (CICA) and is actively participating in the process. Kazakhstan supports India's permanent membership in an expanded UNSC and had extended its support for India's non-permanent membership in 2021-22. India supported Kazakhstan's successful candidature for non-permanent membership of UNSC in 2017-18.

[Note: Tej Kadam: India - Kazakhstan Joint Statement named 'Tej Kadam' during PM Modi's bilateral visit to Astana (08 July 2015): "President Nazarbayev reiterated Kazakhstan's full support for India's permanent membership in an expanded UNSC."]

II. India assumed rotational presidency of SCO in September 2022 culminating in SCO Council of Heads Meeting on 4 July 2023, in virtual format. During the India's presidency, following important visits took place:

#### **Kazakh Participation in Important SCO Meetings**

<b>S. No.</b>	<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name and Designation</b>
1.	Meeting of Secretary of Security Councils of SCO Member States	29 March 2023	Mr. Gizat Nurdauletov Aide to the President - Secretary of the Security Council of the Republic of Kazakhstan
2.	SCO Defence Ministers' Meeting	27-28 April 2023	Kazakh Defense Minister Col. Gen. Ruslan Zhaksylykov participated physically and had bilateral with RM Rajnath Singh
3.	SCO Council of Foreign Ministers' Meeting	05 May 2023	Kazakh DPM -FM Muart Nurtleu participated and had bilateral with EAM Jaishankar.



4.	SCO Council of Heads of State Summit (Virtual)	04 July 2023	President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev participated.
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## 7. Defence Cooperation

I. Defence cooperation is an essential pillar of our strategic partnership with Kazakhstan. The Indo-Kazakh Defence Cooperation is carried out under the framework of an agreement on 'Defence and Military Technical Cooperation' signed in July 2015. Bilateral defence cooperation currently comprises military-technical cooperation, military education and training, joint exercises, bilateral visits, joint sports and adventure activities and a Youth Exchange Program (YEP) between NCC and the Voenni Kafedra (cadet corps) in Kazakhstan.

II. In 2018, India and Kazakhstan agreed for deployment of a Kazakh contingent under the Indian Battalion at UNIFIL, Lebanon. About 530 Kazakh armed forces personnel have participated in the mission so far. Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, the then Raksha Mantri visited Kazakhstan on 2-4 October 2018 for bilateral talks and joint Flag-off of the 1st Kazakh contingent to UNIFIL. After four rotations at Company level, India agreed on a rotation at platoon level which was followed by the sixth to tenth rotation, of six personnel each.

III. A 16-member delegation participated in Def Expo 2020 from 05-07 February 2020 at Lucknow. A three-member delegation from Ministry of Defence of Kazakhstan, led by Lt Gen Ruslan Shpekbayev, Deputy Defence Minister, visited Gandhinagar, Gujarat from 17-19 October 2022, in connection with Defence Expo-2022 and a two-member delegation visited India in February 2023 for Aero India 2023. A two member delegation, led by Chief of Department of International cooperation of Ministry of Defence of Kazakhstan visit New Delhi on 5 December 2022 for joint services staff talks.

IV. On 4 September 2020, Mr. Rajnath Singh, RM, had productive interaction with the Defence Minister of Kazakhstan, Lieutenant General Nurlan Yermekbayev, on the sidelines of Meeting of the Defence Ministers of SCO members in Moscow. Lt. Gen Nurlan Yermekbayev, Minister of Defence

of Kazakhstan paid an official visit to India on 7-9 April 2021. During the visit, Kazakh Defence Minister held bilateral meetings with RM and NSA. A meeting between RM Rajnath Singh and Col Gen Ruslan Zhaksylykov, Defence Minister of Kazakhstan was held on 23 August 2022, on sidelines of SCO Defence Ministers meeting at Tashkent. Shri Pankaj Kumar Singh, Dy NSA led India's delegation at SCO RATS in Astana from 7-9 September 2023. Indian delegation led by Shri Rajesh Arya, AS(NSCS) attended the SCO RATS GLE meeting in Astana from 3-6 September 2023. MOS for Defence & Tourism, Shri Ajay Bhatt met with Mr Sultan Kamaletdinov, Deputy Minister of Defence of Kazakhstan and discussed bilateral defence cooperation, including the UN Peacekeeping Ministerial Meeting in Ghana on 6 December 2023.

V. India and Kazakhstan conducted a 13-day military exercise "KAZIND-21" from 30 August to 11 September 2021 in Taraz, Kazakhstan with a focus on counter-insurgency/counter-terrorism operation in the mountainous, rural scenario under UN mandate. "KAZIND-22" was conducted at Umroi (Meghalaya) from 15-28 December 2022. 'Exercise KAZIND-2023' was held at Otar, Kazakhstan from 30 October to 11 November 2023, in which for the first time Air Forces of both countries and Airborne Assault Forces of Kazakhstan also participated.

VI. India has been providing training to members of the Kazakh Armed Forces under the ITEC program. 360 trainees have been trained in Indian Armed Forces institutions so far. In August 2021, two members from Indian Army officers were deployed to Kazakh National University (NDU), Astana as English Language instructors. The second rotation of the training team is currently underway.

VII. 6th meeting of the India-Kazakhstan JWG on Defence took place in Bengaluru on 22 November 2023. Both sides discussed issues of defence cooperation and matters of mutual interest. The meeting was co-Chaired by JS(IC) Vishwesh Negi and Kazakh Vice Minister, Ministry of Industry and Construction Azamat Beispekov.

VIII. The 5th Meeting of India-Kazakhstan Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism was held in Astana on 08 April 2024. The Indian side was led by Joint Secretary (CT), K.D. Dewal.

## **8. Security**

I. Kazakhstan's National Security Committee Chairman Karim Massimov, who was also former Prime Minister of Kazakhstan, visited India to participate in the Delhi Regional Security Dialogue on Afghanistan, held on 10 November 2021. During the regional conference, Karim Massimov met NSA. He, along with NSAs and Security Council Chiefs of other countries, also had a meeting with PM Modi.

II. An MOU on Cooperation between National Security Councils of the two countries was signed in February 2012. First regular consultations between the National Security Secretariats were held in Astana on 27-28 February 2017. The third consultations were held in Delhi on 5-6 March 2019.

III. The 4th India-Kazakhstan Security Dialogue was held in Astana on 3 August 2023, co-chaired by Amb. Vikram Misri, Deputy National Security Adviser of India and Mr. Nurzhan Kajiakbarov, Deputy Secretary of the Security Council of Kazakhstan.

IV. NSA Ajit Doval led Indian delegation at the 2nd meeting of the National Security Advisors/Secretaries of the Security Councils of India and Central Asia held in Astana on 17 October 2023.

V. NSA Ajit Doval participate in the 19th annual meeting of the secretaries of the security councils of the SCO member states in Astana on 02-03 April 2024.

VI. Defence Secretary Shri Giridhar Aramane participated in SCO Defence Ministers' meeting in Astana on 26 April 2024.

## **9. Trade & Economy**

I. The India-Kazakhstan Inter-Governmental Commission (IGC) established in 1993 is the apex bilateral institutional mechanism for developing trade, economic, scientific, technological, industrial and cultural cooperation between the two countries. The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas on the Indian side and Ministry of Trade and Integration on the Kazakh side have been the nodal ministries with respective Ministers as the Co-Chairs of the Commission. The **14<sup>th</sup> round of IGC was held on 03 June**

**2022 in New Delhi.** Nine Joint Working Groups (JWGs) have been established in the areas of Counter Terrorism, Trade & Economic Cooperation, Defence & Military Technical Cooperation, Transport, Connectivity and Logistics, Information Technology, Hydrocarbons, Textiles, Tea Debt and Space Cooperation. It was decided to set up three new Joint Working Groups on Chabahar port, Pharmaceuticals and Healthcare to take forward bilateral relations in the respective spheres. The 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of India-Kazakhstan JWG on connectivity, transport and logistics was held on 26-27 November 2019 in New Delhi.

II. Kazakhstan is India's largest trade and investment partner in Central Asia. As per statistics of Kazakhstan for 2023, total bilateral trade between India and Kazakhstan amounted to US\$ 1 billion out of which Indian exports amounted to US\$ 580.6 million and Indian imports from Kazakhstan touched US \$ 449.2 million.

III. The 6th JWG meeting on Trade and Economy took place in Astana on 12 July 2018 and the 7<sup>th</sup> Session was held through Video Conference on 10 September 2020. The next JWG meeting is expected to be in Astana in 2024.

IV. FICCI and Chamber of International Commerce of Kazakhstan have set up a Joint Business Council (JBC) to promote trade, economic and investment cooperation between the two countries. The second meeting of the JBC was held in New Delhi on 16 February 2018.

V. APEDA, the organization promoting Indian agro-products sent a delegation to Almaty and Astana in June 2018 that conducted wet sampling of different varieties of Indian mangoes in prominent stores of Kazakhstan. Similarly, a Tea delegation visited Almaty in August 2018 and conducted tea promotion events and held B2B meetings. EEPC India under the aegis of Ministry of Commerce and Industry organized India pavilion at Kazbuild and Aquatherm 2019 which was held at Almaty, Kazakhstan on 4-6 September, 2019. In the India Pavilion, around 30 Indian engineering companies participated to showcase their product and capabilities in the areas of Construction material and Equipment, hardware and tools, Roofing and Technology, window Décor, HVAC equipments and Services, Water purification, Accessories and Valves. A delegation led by CAPEXIL

comprising 18 Indian companies exhibited their products at the Kazcomak Expo held in Almaty on 18-20 September 2019 and also held B2B meetings with local businessmen. Ministries of Tourism from the states of Kerala, Rajasthan and delegates from Ministry of Tourism, Govt. of India and businessmen from Indian tourism sector attended the PATA Travel Mart 2019 held in Astana on 18-20 September, 2019 to promote tourism in India.

VI. PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI) of India and the Pharmaceutical Export Promotion Council of India (Pharmexcil) visited Almaty on 28-29 March, 2022. During the visit they had a conference and a series of B2B meetings with Kazakh counterparts.

VII. The Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC) of India business delegation paid a visit to Almaty (Kazakhstan) on 9-10 February, 2023. Delegation consisted of companies from various sectors such as logistics, tourism, health-care, education, consultancy, IT, construction, animation, etc. The official visit comprised 2 days business program: B2B event and industrial visits.

VIII. On August 24, 2023, a business delegation of the Trade Promotion Council of India (TPCI), comprising more than 20 companies from the ceramics and vitrified tiles sector visited Almaty.

IX. Kazakhstan's Vice Minister of Trade and Integration, Kairat Torebayev led a Kazakh delegation to the 10th Global Dynamic Gujarat Summit from January 10-12, 2024.

## **10. Connectivity**

I. There are direct flights between Delhi and Almaty everyday by the Air Astana, Flyarystan and Indigo. As per the statistics of Kazakhstan, about 80,000 Indians visited Kazakhstan for tourism in the year 2023.

## **11. Cultural relations**

I. India and Kazakhstan enjoy close cultural relations that manifest in popularity of yoga, Indian films, dance and music in Kazakhstan. Swami

Vivekananda Cultural Centre in Astana is engaged in various cultural activities, including conducting of yoga, dance and music classes. India provides scholarships in various disciplines under the ICCR Scholarship programmes for students from Kazakhstan. In 2024, International Day of Yoga was celebrated in 21 cities of Kazakhstan.

II. There are 15 slots allocated to Kazakhstan under General Scholarship Scheme under ICCR. The programme is open to all eligible participants from Kazakhstan. The courses offered include i) Agriculture, Food and Fertilizers, ii) Artificial Intelligence, iii) Banking, Finance, Accounts and Audit, iv) Cyber Technologies, v) Education, vi) Engineering and Technology, vii) Hindi Language, viii) Environmental and Climatic Changes, ix) Government Function, x) health and Yoga, xi) Human Resource Development and Planning etc. which are conducted by reputed institutions in India. In 2022-23, 1 slot was utilized and in 2023-24, 5 slots were utilized.

III. Kazakhstan's Filarmonia Chamber Choir of more than 80 Kazakh musicians reached in Delhi to participate in the 33rd edition of the Lakshminarayana Global Music Festival in New Delhi. MOS Meenakshi Lekhi inaugurated Bharat Symphony on 5 January 2024.

## **12. ITEC/Development Assistance:**

I. India provides capacity building assistance to Kazakhstan in various specialized fields under ITEC program sponsored by the Ministry of External Affairs. Since 1992, about 1400 specialists have undergone training under ITEC programme, which includes defence.

## **13. Consular Matters:**

I. India and Kazakhstan have an agreement on visa free entry for Diplomatic and Official Passport holders. Ordinary passport holders require visa. Since February 2018, Indian has extended **e-visa facility to Kazakh citizens**. During the COVID period, this e-visa was suspended but it is now operational since 06 December 2022.

**II. Since 08 July 2022 Kazakhstan has extended continuous visa-free stay in Kazakhstan for up to 14 days to Indian citizens.** The maximum duration of the visitor's visa-free stays is 42 days within every 180 days.

#### **14. COVID Cooperation**

I. In April 2020, Government of India provided 30000 tablets of Hydroxychloroquin as humanitarian assistance to Kazakhstan for its fight against COVID-19.

II. In May 2021, in view of the sharp deterioration of the epidemiological situation in India around 40 tonnes of air cargo (61.5 lakh medical masks, 4 lakh respirators, 50,000 anti-plague suits, and 105 portable artificial lung ventilation devices made in Kazakhstan) was sent to India by the Govt. of Kazakhstan as humanitarian aid to combat the COVID-19.

#### **15. Indian community**

I. The size of the Indian community is about 10,500 in Kazakhstan. Out of this, about 9,500 are Indian students and the rest are in various professional fields.

II. Several special evacuation flights operated by Air India under the VBM and charter flights evacuated 3,745 Indian nationals from Kazakhstan to India. The evacuated Indian nationals included medical students, tourists, professionals and workers.

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**August 2024**