Chapter III
INDIA’S DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH UZBEKISTAN AND TURKMENISTAN
Keeping in view the importance of Central Asian Republics, particularly the republics of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to India, this chapter analyses the country profile of the both the Republics briefly. Besides, it examines the diplomatic relations between India and these two Central Asian republics, which have been strengthened by the high profile visits of the leaders of both the regions followed by the signing of a number of cooperation agreements.

UZBEKISTAN: A BACKGROUND

Uzbekistan is a sovereign democratic Republic, which was founded on 31 August 1991. The Republic makes up both the geographical and political basis of Central Asia and is one of the most ancient civilizations that emerged in this region. This land was the crossroads of the Great Silk Route and the history of the Uzbek people goes back more than 3,000 years. The geographical territory of the Republic of Uzbekistan comprises 447,000 sq. kms. It is located at the heart of Central Asia, between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers. There are mountainous and desert zones, and fertile valleys with rich natural resources. It is situated west of the People’s Republic of China and the Republic of Kyrgyzstan, south of Russia and the republic of Kazakhstan, northwest of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan and north of Iran and the Republic of Turkmenistan. (Uzbekistan 2006, p. 4)

The Republic comprises 12 provinces and one Autonomous Republic. The country was created as a civic legal state founded on the universal principles of

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1 The provinces, locally known as \textit{vilayats}, consist of Andijan, Bukhara, Jizzakh, Kashkadarya, Navoi, Namangan, Samarkand, Surkhandarya, Tashkent, Ferghana and Khorezm. The Autonomous Republic is the Republic of Karakalpakstan with its capital city of Nukus.
democracy and respect for human basic rights and freedom and social justice. The highest state representative body is a one-chamber parliament, the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, with legislative powers. Having gained independence peacefully, by a parliamentary resolution, Uzbekistan chose its development path aimed at building a free and legal market based democratic society and creating adequate living conditions for its citizens. Uzbekistan has chosen its own way of development, acknowledged throughout the world as the “Uzbek model” of government and social construction.

Uzbekistan is a country with rich mineral resources, which equal 3.3 trillion US dollars. (Uzbekistan 2006, p. 5) More than 100 types of mineral deposits can be found in its depths (natural gas, petroleum, coal, gold, uranium, silver, copper, lead and zinc, tungsten, molybdenum, etc.). Uzbekistan is one of the world leaders in terms of its reserves in Gold, Copper, Silver, Zinc and tungsten as a whole, and ranks fourth in the world for Gold deposits. (Abduraxmonovich, 2003, p. 5) Currently producing approximately 70 tons of gold per year, Uzbekistan is the seventh largest producer in the world. Annually, mineral wealth worth 5.5 billion US dollars is extracted and new resources worth 6-7 billion US dollars have been prospected. (Uzbekistan 2006, p. 5) Uzbekistan is the fourth largest cotton producer and second largest cotton-fibre exporter in the world. The total annual cotton fibre production is around 1.5 million tonnes. It is also one of the largest producers of many varieties of vegetables and fruits in the world. Besides, it has significant potential in construction,
maintenance and servicing of aircraft, helicopters and engines. (Uzbekistan 2006, p. 5)

Uzbekistan has the major oil and gas fields of Central Asia. It has confirmed reserves of two trillion cubic meters of gas and 350 million tons of oil. It also accounts for 14 per cent of the potential hydroelectric resources in Central Asia. Uzbekistan also possesses large deposits of crude oil and gas. The country has large plans for development of the gas extraction industry and production connected to natural gas and gas condensate extraction increased steadily from three to eight million tons and gas extraction from 40 to 60 cubic meters. (Abduraxmonovich, 2003, p. 6) Uzbekistan also possesses the second largest deposits of coal in Central Asia. The proven reserves of coal in Uzbekistan make up about two billion tons. There are also more than 160 deposits of marble and 15 deposits of granite have been discovered. The total reserves of decorative stones exceed 85 million cubic metres. (Uzbekistan 2006, p. 5)

Uzbekistan, the most populous Central Asian Republic with a population of 26 million, which is even higher than the combined population of Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkmenistan (Uzbekistan 2006, p. 5), has been called and considered as an ‘anchor state’ or the key to the Central Asia region. (Puri, 1997, p. 245) Under the guidance of its President Islam Karimov, it was indeed Uzbekistan which shortly after becoming independent took the first steps in establishing direct and cordial relations with India, as one of its most prominent neighbours. Uzbekistan’s Indo-centric
approach for greater cooperation and friendly relations stems from the high profile visits.

INDO-UZBEK DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Since 1991, India and Uzbekistan have come a long way and in the past 16 years, Uzbekistan has emerged as an important partner of India in Central Asia. Both the governments have taken various initiatives together in order to counter common threats. Over the last 16 years, the republics of India and Uzbekistan have signed several agreements to strengthen their relations. (Meena Singh Roy, pp. 93-123)

For India, the importance of Uzbekistan stems from four important facts, i) the strategic location of the republic of Uzbekistan makes it an important Central Asian state; ii) It is the only state which has borders with all other four republics of Central Asia as well as Afghanistan, iii) its huge energy resources are important from the point of view of India’s increasing energy demands and iv) it could provide transport corridor to India via Afghanistan.

The rich inheritance of civilization and historical ties between political and economic changes that have taken place through the centuries, has, in fact, gone beyond historical and cultural ties into strong political and security cooperation. Over the years there has been a steady exchange of high level visits between the two countries. Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru accompanied by Smt. Indira Gandhi visited Uzbekistan in 1955 and 1961. Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri visited Tashkent in January 1966. He died tragically in Tashkent. His name has been commemorated - a street and school have been named after him and there are both a
statue and a bust in his memory in Tashkent. In January-February 1975, the then First Secretary of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan Sharaf Rashidov led a CPSU delegation to India. President R. Venkataraman visited Uzbekistan in 1988, and Prime Minister V. P. Singh in July 1990. Consulate General of India in Tashkent was formally inaugurated on 7 April 1987. Following independence of Uzbekistan, it was upgraded to the level of Embassy through the signing of a diplomatic and consular protocol on 18 March 1992. (Indian Embassy at Tashkent, August 2005)

The process towards establishment of India’s new ties with the Central Asian countries had begun with the official visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov to India from 17 to 19 August 1991. During Karimov’s visit, a number of agreements were signed besides two framework agreements on economic and cultural cooperation. (Sahai, 2005, p. 42) Both the republics agreed to cooperate on the economic, commercial, scientific and technical fields. Besides, they agreed for cooperation in the spheres of culture, arts, education, science, tourism, sports and mass media. (Mavlonov, p. 35) Karimov’s visit was followed by a delegation of Uzbekistan Parliamentarians led by the Speaker Yuldashev who reiterated his country’s stand that “Kashmir was an internal matter of Indian and any dispute with Pakistan should be resolved on a bilateral basis under the Shimla Agreement.” (Shri Prakash, 2004, p. 178)

These visits were soon reciprocated by the highly placed Indian leaders and officials. R. L. Bhatia, the Minister of State for External Affairs, was the first high level Indian dignitary to visit Uzbekistan in October 1992. His visit followed India’s
formal recognition of Russia and other Republics of the former Soviet Union on 26 December 1991. (Shri Prakash, 2004, p. 178) During his visit, India and Uzbekistan signed an agreement to establish a Joint Commission for technical and economic cooperation, which would meet once in two years alternately in New Delhi and Tashkent, the capital cities of India and Uzbekistan. As the Uzbek Foreign Minister, Abdur Razakov stated on this occasion, “it was the first such agreement signed by Uzbekistan since its independence in 1991 and would serve as a model for Uzbek cooperation with other countries”. (Shri Prakash, 2004, p. 178) The two sides also signed protocols on culture and arts, higher education, mass media and sports to give shape to the earlier agreement signed at the time of the Uzbek President’s visit to India in August 1991. At this time, the Indian Government offered to extend the Indian Technical Exchange and Cooperation Programme to Uzbekistan for training Uzbek nationals in trade and banking. (Shri Prakash, 2004, p. 178)

Indian Deputy Minister of Commerce led a multi-disciplinary delegation including businessmen to Central Asia from 27 October to 10 November 1992 and visited Uzbekistan besides the republics of Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. The delegation held discussion on trade and economic cooperation and also on the establishment of joint ventures in various sectors including commercial and banking sectors. The delegation announced a credit of 10 million US dollars to Uzbekistan. (Shri Prakash, 2004, pp. 180-181)

Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao was the first Indian Prime Minister to visit Uzbekistan from 23 to 25 May 1993. The Indian Prime Minister declared the
setting up of Indian Cultural Centres in Tashkent. (Sahai, 2005, pp. 42-43) During his visit, Narasimha Rao assured the Uzbek leadership to upgrade the Indian Consulate in Tashkent to a full scale embassy, which was later done in September 1994. (Shri Prakash, 2004, p. 181) Along with Uzbek President, Islam Karimov, the visiting Indian Prime Minister vowed to jointly fight terrorism and religious fundamentalism. In a bid to expand bilateral commercial, trade and investment ties, both the leaders signed five agreements relating to political relations, trade, civil aviation and tourism. (Shri Prakash, 2004, p. 181) An Indo-Uzbek Treaty on the Principles of Inter-state relations and Cooperation was signed during this visit. (Mavljonov, p. 35) Prime Minister Narasimha Rao announced the setting up of an 'India Chair' at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent, opening of an Indian Cultural Centre in Tashkent, donations of medicines and medical equipment worth four million Indian rupees, a credit of 10 million US dollars for joint ventures, project exports and purchase of capital goods from India and donation of equipment for receiving Doordarshan programmes for telecast on Uzbek Television. (Indian Embassy at Tashkent, August 2005)

Uzbek President Islam Karimov paid another visit to India from 3 to 4 January 1994. He reaffirmed Uzbekistan’s desire to strengthen relations with India. (Sahai, 2005, p. 43) Both the countries set up resident missions in their respective countries as part of the establishment of diplomatic relations. India upgraded the existing Consulate General at Tashkent to the Embassy level (Sahai, 2005, p. 43) as promised during Prime Minister Narasimha Rao’s visit to Uzbekistan in 1994. Islam Karimov
was conferred on an honorary degree by the prestigious Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi. During his visit to India, he met a number of Indian businessmen and invited them to invest in Uzbekistan. Several agreements were signed to further cooperation in the fields of economy, culture, telecommunications and post. Karimov reiterated the setting up of the Indian Cultural Centre in Tashkent. There was an exchange of the instruments of ratification of the Indo-Uzbek Treaty on principles of Inter-state relations and cooperation. (Mavlonov, p. 35)

The Indian Cultural Centres have been playing a very vital role in not only promoting performing arts, but also in organizing seminars, conferences, lectures etc on relevant topics thereby generating greater awareness of India in Central Asian countries. This has resulted in bringing about greater connectivity and awareness at the people to people level. Indian Cultural Centre named after Lal Bahadur Shastri is very active in Uzbekistan. The Centre organises regular courses in Yoga, Kathak, Hindi and Indian studies. It also organises a number of events in collaboration with Uzbek cultural institutions and groups. The centennial birthday celebrations of Lal Bahadur Shastri were celebrated in Uzbekistan in 2004-05. (World Mass Communication, p. 14)

In 2003, under the Indo-Uzbek Cultural Exchange Programme, two exhibitions were organized in Tashkent – (a) An Exhibition of Indian musical instruments and (b) An Exhibition of Madhubani Paintings. Two Indian musical groups visited Tashkent and presented concerts. In return, two cultural groups from
Uzbekistan visited India. A festival of Indian Culture was organized in Tashkent in August-September 2004. (Indian Embassy at Tashkent, August 2005)

Some of the recent specific measures taken by India to promote its cultural linkages with Uzbekistan are:

- Setting up Institutes of Excellence in Information Technology education;
- Scholarship by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations to the Uzbek students
- Two slots for Uzbek scholars at the Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), New Delhi.

Indian films have been quite popular throughout the Soviet Union, and Indian films continue to remain popular in Uzbekistan even after Soviet disintegration. Many movie theatres are screening Indian films in Tashkent. The local TV channels also show Indian films quite often. This has made Indian films an important element of Uzbek cultural life. India and Uzbekistan have signed a Cultural Exchange Programme for 2005-07. (World Mass Communication, p. 14) In 2006, several Indian cultural groups visited Tashkent. A chamber orchestra “Sogdiana” from the Tashkent Conservatory gave several concerts in Delhi, Lucknow (Uttar Pradesh) and Jaipur (Rajasthan). It performed Uzbek folk dances and also the melodies and songs from classic Indian movies. In January 2007, for the first time group of drama actors from Uzbekistan took part at a Festival of drama theatres in Delhi. (World Mass Communication, p. 14) The Uzbek people remember Indo-Uzbek cultural links the great Indian showman, Raj Kapoor, who had visited Uzbekistan as many as 14 times.
In November 2006, Raj Kapoor's two sons visited Uzbekistan and took part in two concerts in Tashkent and one each in Namangan and Samarkand. (World Mass Communication, p. 16)

India shares its expertise with Uzbekistan in education and human resources. Indian government provides about 120 scholarships to Uzbek professionals to visit India for 2-6 months to undergo training under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme. 20 scholarships are provided to every year for undergraduate and post-graduate studies in Indian institutions. (World Mass Communication, p. 16) There is an India Chair at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy at Tashkent since 1st October 1996. (Indian Embassy at Tashkent, August 2005) During the Uzbek President Islam Karimov's visit to India in April 2005, an MoU was signed between India's Jawaharlal Nehru University in New Delhi and the Tashkent based University of World of Economy and Diplomacy to accelerate academic exchanges. Similarly, during Indian Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh's visit to Tashkent in 2006, an MoU was signed between Delhi University and Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies. (World Mass Communication, p. 16)

The second meeting of the Indo-Uzbek Joint Commission which followed the start of the India Cultural Centre in May 1994, relaying of Doordarshan programmes on Uzbek Television, and the establishment of an Indian Chair at the World University of Economic and Diplomacy. At the insistence of Indian leadership, the Republic of Uzbekistan joined the Non-Aligned Movement in 1995. (Shri Prakash, 2004, p. 181)
Subsequently, the then External Affairs Minister, Pranab Mukherjee made a three-day visit to Uzbekistan in April 1996. He met a number of Uzbek leaders including President Islam Karimov, Prime Minister U. Sultanov and Foreign Minister A. Kamilov. He also co-chaired the third meeting of the Indo-Uzbek joint ventures in fields like pharmaceuticals, tea packaging and stainless steel. It was also decided that Science and Technology Cooperation will further be strengthened. On the Afghanistan issue both sides stressed that its territorial integrity should be maintained and all external interference be ended. (Shri Prakash, 2004, p. 184)

Mutual exchanges and interactions at the highest level further continued between India and Uzbekistan. During 19-23, the Uzbek Foreign Minister Kamilov paid a visit to India and signed a new agreement for imparting training to 25 Uzbek diplomats. There were several exchanges of visits by Scientists as well. Besides, a Indian cultural group participated in the international music festival held at Samarkand in August 1997 and won the first prize the music competition. (Annual Report of Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 1997-98, p. 43) In December 1997, the India Business Centre was started in Tashkent which is being run jointly by the Confederation of Indian Industry and the Ministry of Commerce. Indian Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, VK Ramamurthy led a delegation to Uzbekistan in October 1998, which included science and technology experts from the Ministry of Science and Technology, with a view to explore further possibilities of cooperation in science and technology sector. (www.indianembassy.org)
Changes in Governments in India have not affected the ongoing interaction between India and the Central Asian Republics. K. Ramamurthy, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas headed a delegation to Uzbekistan in October 1998. Earlier in June 1998 the institute of Defence Studies and Analysis Director, Jasjit Singh visited Uzbekistan to interact with the Institute of Strategic and Regional Research of Uzbekistan. (Shri Prakash, 2004, p. 184) Two rounds of Foreign Office consultations were held in May 1998 when the Secretary (East), Nareshwar Dayal visited Tashkent. From 9 to 12 December 1998, Kazakh Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, I. Ergashev visited Delhi for Foreign Office consultations. The fourth session of the Indo-Uzbek Joint Commission was held in New Delhi from 17-20 February 1999. The Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister, MZ Usmanov visited New Delhi for this purpose. (Online: Web, www.indianembassy.org)

In May 1999, Jaswant Singh, the Minister for External Affairs visited Uzbekistan and signed the bilateral investment protection agreement. Both sides promised each other to share intelligence with regards to counter insurgency operations against terrorism. Both India and Uzbekistan are also a part of the “six plus two” group designated by the UN to bring peace to Afghanistan. The group also includes USA, Russia, Afghanistan, China, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Pakistan. (Shri Prakash, 2004, p. 184)

Uzbekistan has welcomed India’s proposal seeking its participation in a cargo transfer arrangement along a land corridor through Iran via the rail route which terminates at the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas. During Jaswant Singh’s visit to
Uzbekistan India agreed to extend another 10 million US dollars credit to Uzbekistan.

On its part in September 1999, Uzbekistan gifted India with a 1.5 kilowatt solar furnace.

During his third visit to India from 1-3 May 2000, Uzbek President Islam Karimov concluded nine agreements with India. The most important of these nine agreements were the Joint Declaration on Principles of Relations between the two republics. Besides, India and Uzbekistan signed an Extradition Treaty and an agreement for a Credit Line from India worth ten million US dollars. (Mavlonov, p. 35) In the year 2000 itself, ten inter-governmental and inter-departmental agreements were signed and till 2001, there were as many as 44 agreements between the two countries, which provide a solid basis for furthering the relations in all fields of political, trade, economic and cultural relations. (Teshabaev, p. 174)

Considering the significant degree of mutual appreciation which exists between India and Uzbekistan, the leaders of the two countries have made consistent efforts to further develop their relations in the post-Soviet period. Other important visits in recent times include - Indian External Affairs Minister's visit to Uzbekistan in May 1999 and November 2003; Uzbek Minister of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education’s visit to India in January 2003 and October 2004; Uzbek Defence Minister’s visit to India in April-May 2003; Indian Minister of State for External Affairs, Mr. E. Ahamed’s visit to Uzbekistan on 1-4 October 2004 to take part in the Birth Centenary celebrations of Indian Prime Minister Late Shri Lal Bahadur Shastri in Uzbekistan. A Multi-disciplinary high level Uzbek delegation
headed by Ms. Sh. Abdullaeva, Deputy Chairman of Agency for Foreign Economic Relations of Uzbekistan visited India on 15-19th February 2005.

A 73 member delegation led by Indian Minister of State for Commerce and Industry, EVKS Elangovan, visited Uzbekistan in January 2005 as part of “Focus CIS Programme.” During this visit, the fifth Joint Commission Meeting was held, which laid considerable emphasis on trade and economic cooperation between the two republics. Both the countries signed agreements for joint ventures in the fields of tourism, higher education and apparels as part of measures to increase bilateral economic cooperation. The possibility of building an international transport corridor between India and CIS countries to facilitate smooth movement of goods and services was also discussed during this meeting. An agreement with the EXIM Bank of India for expanding the scope of financial cooperation was also signed. (www.hinduonnet.com)

**Islam Karimov’s Visit to India in 2005**

Uzbek President Islam Karimov visited India again in 2005 at the invitation of his Indian counterpart, Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. He was accompanied by the Uzbek First Deputy Prime Minister, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Minister of Higher and Secondary Specialised Education and the and Minister of Defence besides Chairman of the Committee for Foreign Policy of the Senate of Uzbekistan. During the visit, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, H.E. Mr. Islam A. Karimov met President Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam. He also held meetings with Vice President Shri Bhairon Singh Shekhawat, Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, Shri Pranab
Mukherjee, Minister of Defence, Shri K. Natwar Singh, Minister of External Affairs and Shri Kamal Nath, Minister of Commerce and Industry. (http://meaindia.nic.in/jdhome.htm)

The visit of Karimov provided a continuation to the practice of regular exchange of high level visits between Uzbekistan and India, and is symbolic of the longstanding historical ties and deep cultural affinity that exists between the two countries. The talks were held in an atmosphere of warmth, friendship, trust and mutual confidence that is characteristic of the relationship. Both sides note with satisfaction the development of bilateral relations which serves their long term national interests, strengthens bilateral cooperation, and contributes to international peace and security. The Sides confirm their intention to further develop their bilateral relations on the principles of the UN Charter, respect for each other’s sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference in internal affairs. Both the sides note that the existing level of consultations between them promotes bilateral relations. The Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of India wish to continue this intensive interaction to strengthen friendship between the peoples of the two states for mutual benefit. (http://meaindia.nic.in/jdhome.htm)

Twelve agreements/MoUs were signed during Karimov’s visit. Eight MoUs were signed between Indian and Uzbek institutions and companies in Information Technology, banking, tourism and education. (Indian Embassy at Tashkent, August 2005)
During Karimov’s three day stay in India from 4 to 6 April 2005, the following bilateral agreements were signed: (Mavlonov, p. 35)

(i) Agreement on cooperation in Military and Military-Technical areas between the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Ministry of Defence of the Republic of India.

(ii) Exchange Programme between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and Government of the Republic of India on cooperation in the field of Education.


Both the countries are convinced that development of trade and tourism between India and Uzbekistan will promote people-to-people contacts that have historically existed between the two sides, and strengthen cooperation and goodwill between the peoples of the two States. In this connection, both the sides noted the signing between the concerned organizations of the two countries of the following documents: (Mavlonov, p. 35)

(i) Agreement on cooperation between the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan.
(ii) Agreement on cooperation between the Federation of Indian Export Organisations and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan.

(iii) Memorandum of Understanding between the State Trading Corporation of India Ltd. and the Agency for Foreign Economic Relations of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

(iv) Protocol of Understanding between Ghalib Institute (India) and Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies (Uzbekistan).

(v) Memorandum of Understanding between Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi and the University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Tashkent.

(vi) Protocol of Intention for cooperation in Tourism between National Company of Uzbekistan “Uzbektourism” and the Tourism Development Corporation of India.

(vii) Memorandum of Understanding on business cooperation between the National Bank for Foreign Economic Activities of Uzbekistan and Export-Import Bank of India.

(viii) Memorandum of Understanding on cooperation between the National Bank for Foreign Economic Activities of Uzbekistan and the State Bank of India.

Both the sides recognized the need to enhance trade, economic and investment cooperation and linkages in the banking and finance sector and decided to encourage further contacts between their businessmen and entrepreneurs and facilitate their visits to each other’s country. They expressed satisfaction at the results of the Fifth Session of the Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation, held in Tashkent in January 2005. Both countries noted
the potential for cooperation in the sphere of small business and entrepreneurship, light industry, oil and gas, aviation, tourism, pharmaceuticals and information technology etc. They welcomed the setting up of a joint Uzbek-Indian trading house in India to facilitate and promote bilateral trade. They noted the potential of Information Technology in improving the lives of people. Uzbekistan noted with satisfaction the completion of the computerization project of post offices in Tashkent carried out through India’s aid programme. It also welcomed the commencement of work in March 2005 for the cooperation project in Tashkent to set up an Indo-Uzbek Centre for Information Technology. It recognised the importance of growing opportunities for technical training and higher education in India provided to Uzbek nationals under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme and other Indian scholarships. They agreed to intensify linkages between educational institutions in the two countries. Noting the rich historical and cultural heritage of the two countries, both countries emphasized the need to intensify further cultural cooperation which contributes to strengthening the bonds between their peoples. They underlined their resolve to fight terrorism on a long term and sustained basis and affirm that international terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and condemn in the strongest terms all acts of terrorism. The Sides emphasize the need for an early conclusion of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism and resolved to continue consultations between Ministries of Foreign Affairs of both the states, and coordinate their efforts through the Joint Working Group on Combating International Terrorism. (http://meaindia.nic.in/jdhome.htm)
Both countries expressed their support to the efforts of the Government of Afghanistan to build a strong, united, prosperous and independent country. The geographical location and traditional links with Afghanistan of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of India together with their economic and technical potential, provide possibilities for cooperation in the reconstruction process in Afghanistan. They underlined the importance of early realization of the international trans-Afghanistan transport corridor. Realization of this project will significantly decrease the distance and associated costs for transportation of goods between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Republic of India, and will also provide an opportunity to Afghanistan to integrate into the regional system of transport and communications. It was noted that the Zaranj-Dilaram road stretch, being built by India in Afghanistan, will constitute a key segment of the route linking Uzbekistan to the Chahbahar Port in Iran. They stressed the urgent need for reforms of the structure and functioning of the United Nations Organisation so as to enhance its efficacy in dealing with the contemporary challenges and making it more reflective of the current geo-political and economic realities. Uzbekistan supported the move of India to become a permanent member of the expanded UN Security Council. (http://meaindia.nic.in/jdhome.htm)

Both countries noted with satisfaction that the consultations during the visit constituted an important event in the steady development of mutually beneficial Indo-Uzbek cooperation. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov invited the President of the Republic of India, Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam to pay a state
visit to the Republic of Uzbekistan. The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan also invited Dr. Manmohan Singh, the Prime Minister of India to visit Uzbekistan. (http://meaindia.nic.in/jdhome.htm)

A parliamentary delegation led by Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of the Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Erkin Kh. Khalilov paid an official visit to India from 22-24 November 2005. The delegation met the Vice President and Lok Sabha Speaker besides the Minister of State for External Affairs. Both the sides agreed on the necessity to expand parliamentary and people-to-people contact as well as the trade and economic relations between Uzbekistan and India. (Uzbekistan 2006, p. 13)

Indian Prime Minister’s Visit to Uzbekistan in 2006

During Indian Prime Minister, Dr. Manmohan Singh’s visit to Tashkent in April 2006, the two sides inked seven agreements including a Memorandum of Understanding for cooperation between the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas and Uzbekistan’s National Holding Company, Uzbekneftegaz. (The Hindu, 27 April 2006, p. 1) The six MoUs signed between the two countries focused on matters such as establishing an Enterpreneurship Development Centre at Tashkent, cooperation in the field of oil, natural gas, geology, natural resources, agricultural research and partnership between Delhi University, Delhi and the Tashkent Institute of Oriental Studies. (“Historical Links, Civilisational Affinities”, The Hindu, 27 April 2006, p. 11) Uzbekistan readily accepted India’s offer to set up satellite-based tele-education and tele-medicine connectivity between the two countries. Dr. Singh and Uzbek
Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyayev jointly inaugurated an Indo-Uzbek Centre for Information Technology named after India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. (The Hindu, 27 April 2006, p. 11)

A Memorandum of cooperation between Gas Authority of Indian Limited and Uzbekeneftegaz and an MoU on geology and mineral resource between the Coal Ministry and Uzbekistan’s State Committee were also signed. Uzbek President Islam Karimov said he was aware that energy security was an important part of India’s policy. “Uzbekistan is ready to allocate geological territory to Indian companies to explore the resource of gas and, oil and other hydrocarbons”, he added. The products of this exploration could be shared on 50:50 basis. (The Hindu, 27 April 2006, p. 1)

Dr. Singh said India feels Uzbekistan, which has an estimated 594 million barrels of proven oil reserve and 66.2 trillion cubic feet of natural gas reserves, “as an important element in any effort to optimally utilise the energy resources of Central Asia.” (The Hindu, 27 April 2006, p. 1) On the pacts signed between the two countries, Dr. Singh said the next step would be the signing of a document for specifically issuing allocation on the basis of concessions to Indian companies of territories for further allocation of hydrocarbon resources in Uzbekistan. (The Hindu, 27 April 2006, p. 1)

Speaking at a banquet hosted in Tashkent by the Uzbek President in his honour, Dr. Singh called upon Tashkent to lead the way in ensuring peace and stability in the region. “our common objective is to seek peace, progress and prosperity for our people. Terrorism is a menace that must be fought collectively”, he
added. He further said, "stability and prosperity of Central Asia is in the interest of not just India but the world community as a whole. This goal cannot be reached without Uzbekistan." (The Hindu, 27 April 2006, p. 1)

Uzbekistan backed India’s claim to permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. Addressing a joint press conference, Uzbek President said that the two sides agreed to set up working groups in the oil and gas sector, besides on information technology, under the framework of an Inter-Governmental Commission. (The Hindu, 27 April 2006, p. 1) Both the leaders discussed the issue of terrorism at length besides the situation in war-torn Afghanistan and the reforms of the United Nations. Enhancement of energy, economic and trade cooperation were among the other topics discussed during the meeting. (The Hindu, 27 April 2006, p. 1)

An important common concern between India and Uzbekistan is the issue of international terrorism. Both the countries suffer threats from extremist, terrorist and fundamentalist groups. While Uzbekistan receives frequent threats from *Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan* (IMU) and *Hizb-ut-Tahrir*, India faces the same from several terrorist organisations from across the border. In order to counter such threats, both countries set up Working Group on terrorism. They also shared the view that the problems of drug trafficking and threat of Weapons of Mass Destruction must be addressed jointly. In their joint statement issued at the end of Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s official discussions with Uzbek leadership in April 2006, the two countries reiterated "their resolve, on a long term basis, to fight against terrorism,"
which is one of the most serious threats to international peace and security.” (The Hindu, 27 April 2006, p. 11)

Karimov identified drugs trafficking along with terrorism and religious fundamentalism as common challenges facing Uzbekistan and India. Endorsing India’s stance on terrorism, Karimov said, “Uzbekistan will support India’s well-balanced policy to ensure stability and peace in the world.” (The Times of India, 27 April 2006, p. 12) Both the countries have also been working together to establish partnership in the security arena. During the third India-Central Asian Conference in Tashkent in November 2003, the Uzbek Foreign Minister stated that “the issue of security and integration in Central Asia has been strongly supported and initiated by Uzbekistan’s reliable and tested partners, like India. The continued discussion on these issues has great importance not only for Central Asian states but for India as well, since it represents an important step in developing cooperation and ensuring security in the region.” (Meena Singh Roy, “India-Uzbekistan: Emerging Partnership”, Himalayan and Central Asian Studies, 9 (1-2), p.104) Besides, Uzbekistan and India share a tradition of secularism and accommodating the interests and aspirations of diverse ethnic groups. President Karimov and other Uzbek leaders have, on several occasions, publicly spoken of their admiration for the Indian model of a secular and democratic state. (The Hindu, 27 April 2006, p. 11)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 2005</td>
<td>E. Kh. Khalilov, Speaker of the Legislative Chamber of Uzbek Parliament</td>
<td>Agreement on expansion of parliamentary and people-to-people contacts and trade and economic relations between India and Uzbekistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2005</td>
<td>Islam Karimov, President</td>
<td>10 agreements on defence, culture, educational cooperation etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2004</td>
<td>Sadik S Safaev, Foreign Minister</td>
<td>MoU to establish Indo-Uzbek IT Centre; India to provide Rs. 30 million in the form of technical expertise, hardware, software, networking equipment, &amp; training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2003</td>
<td>A H Kamilov, Foreign Minister</td>
<td>Agreement on joint working group on international terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2000</td>
<td>Islam Karimov, President</td>
<td>Joint Declaration and 8 agreements including an Extradition Treaty and an agreement for a Credit Line from India for US$ 10 million.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 1999</td>
<td>M. Z. Usmanov, Deputy PM</td>
<td>Participated in Indo-Uzbek Joint Commission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 1996</td>
<td>A. Komilov, Foreign Minister</td>
<td>High level meetings, cooperation in HRD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 1994</td>
<td>Utkir Sultanov, Deputy Prime Minister</td>
<td>Setting up a sub-Commission on Trade, Economic, Science and Technology Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 1994</td>
<td>Islam Karimov, President</td>
<td>Agreements on cooperation in economic, cultural, telecom etc, Honorary Degree by JNU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1993</td>
<td>S. Said Kassim, Foreign Minister</td>
<td>High level meetings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2
High Level Visits from India to Uzbekistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2006</td>
<td>Dr. Manmohan Singh, PM of India</td>
<td>Several bilateral agreements; Operation of Indo-Uzbek Centre for Information and Technology, named after Jawaharlal Nehru.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2004</td>
<td>E. Ahmed, Minister of State, External Affairs</td>
<td>High level meetings and attended a function to mark the 100th Birth Anniversary of former Indian PM Lal Bahadur Shashtri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2003</td>
<td>Yashwant Sinha, External Affairs Minister</td>
<td>High level meetings, MOU between FSI and Uzbek University of World Economy and Diplomacy, inaugurated Third India Central Asia Regional Conference.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1999</td>
<td>Jaswant Singh, External Affairs Minister</td>
<td>Investment Protection Agreement signed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1998</td>
<td>VK Ramamurthy, Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas</td>
<td>Headed a delegation of science and technology experts from Ministry of Science and Technology.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 1996</td>
<td>Pranab Mukherjee, External Affairs Minister</td>
<td>Meetings and discussions on cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1995</td>
<td>Salman Khursheed, Minister of State, External Affairs</td>
<td>Attended conference of foreign Ministers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1993</td>
<td>PV Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister</td>
<td>Treaty on the Principles of Inter-state Relations and Cooperation. India Chair at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy in Tashkent, opening of an Indian Cultural Centre in Tashkent, donations of medicines and medical equipment worth Rs. 40 lakhs, a credit of US$ 10 million for joint ventures etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1992</td>
<td>Salman Khursheed, Deputy Minister of Commerce</td>
<td>Discussions on trade and economic cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 1992</td>
<td>R L. Bhatia, Minister of State External Affairs</td>
<td>Cooperation agreements signed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TURKMENISTAN: A BACKGROUND

Turkmenistan, formerly known as Turkmenia, is a sand-swept Central Asian Republic. The smallest of the five republics with a population of four million, Turkmenistan is physically isolated from the other four Central Asian Republics by a vast expanding desert expanse.

Turkmenistan is bounded by the Caspian Sea in the west, Kazakhstan in the north, Uzbekistan in the east, and Iran and Afghanistan in the south. It has long border of 3,736 kms - Afghanistan 744 kms, Iran 992 kms, Kazakhstan 379 kms and Uzbekistan 1,621 kms. About nine-tenths of Turkmenistan is desert, chiefly the Kara-Kum, which is one of the world's largest sand deserts, it is approximately 138,966 sq mi (360,000 sq kms).

History of Turkmenistan shows that it was once part of the ancient Persian Empire. The Turkmen people were originally pastoral nomads and some of them continued this way of life up into the 20th century, living in transportable dome-shaped felt tents. Alexander the Great conquered the territory in the 4th century B.C. on his way to India. One hundred fifty years later, the Parthian Kingdom took control of Turkmenistan, establishing its capital in Nisa, an area now located in the suburbs of capital Ashgabat. In the 7th century AD, Arabs conquered this region, bringing with them the Islamic religion and incorporating the Turkmen into Middle Eastern culture. In the middle of the 11th century AD, the powerful Turks of the Seljuk Empire ruled the territory of Turkmenistan. The empire broke down in the second half of 12th century AD, and the Turkmen lost their independence when Great Mongol emperor
Genghis Khan took control of the eastern Caspian Sea region on his march west. For the next seven centuries, the Turkmen people lived under various empires and fought constant intertribal wars. Ghenghis Khan conquered the land in the 13th century; they dominated the area for the next two centuries until they were deposed by Uzbeks in the late 15th century. (http://www.turkmenistanembassy.org/)

Prior to the 19th century, this region was divided into two lands, one belonging to the Khanate of Khiva and the other to the Khanate of Bukhara. In 1868 AD, when the Khanate of Khiva was made part of the Russian Empire, this region became known as the Trans-Caspian Region of Russian Turkistan. The October Revolution of 1917 in Russia and subsequent political unrest led to the declaration of the Turkmen Republic as one of the 15 republics of the Soviet Union in 1924. Turkmenistan was later formed out of the Turkistan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic, founded in 1922, and was made an independent Soviet Socialist Republic on 13 May 1925. Turkmenistan declared its sovereignty in August 1990 and became a member of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) on 21 December 1991, together with ten other former Soviet republics. (http://www.turkmenistanembassy.org/) Saparmurat Niyazov became the first President of the new republic and remained so till his death in December 2006. Turkmenistan held its first multi-candidate Presidential elections in 11 February 2007. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedow, a former Niyazov aide, was elected as the country's new president by securing 89.2 per cent of the total votes polled. (www.cia.gov.in)
The population of Turkmenistan is 5,097,028 by July 2007, majority of which are ethnic Turkmen (85 per cent), others being Uzbek (5 per cent), Russian (4 per cent) and others (6 per cent). 89 per cent of the population is Sunni Muslim, Muslim 89 per cent, Eastern Orthodox nine per cent, unknown two per cent. (www.cia.gov.in) Turkmen is the official language of Turkmenistan, though Russian still is widely spoken as a “language of inter-ethnic communication” (as per the 1992 constitution). Turkmen language is spoken by 72 per cent of the population, Russian 12 per cent, Uzbek nine per cent and others seven per cent.

The country has two parliamentary bodies, a People's Council or Halk Maslahaty (supreme legislative body of up to 2,500 delegates, some elected by popular vote and some appointed; meets at least yearly) and a National Assembly or Majlis (50 seats; members are elected by popular vote to serve five-year terms).

Turkmenistan's economy is a Soviet-style command economy. Agriculture products include cotton, grain and livestock. Industry and services are almost entirely provided by government or government-owned entities, while agriculture is dominated by a state order system. Turkmenistan is an important supplier of raw materials, especially natural gas, petrochemicals and raw cotton. In 2005, Turkmenistan produced 700,000 tons of cotton, the second largest in the region after Uzbekistan. (http://www.turkmenistanembassy.org/) Other natural resources of the country include sulfur and salt.

Outside estimates place Turkmenistan's proven natural gas reserves among those of the top 15 of gas-producing countries. The country produced 53.5 billion
cubic meters (bcm) of gas in 2002 on the background of domestic consumption standing at 10 bcm. It exported 43.5 bcm of gas at the same time. In 2004, country’s natural gas production was 58.57 billion cubic metres and export was 42 billion cubic metres. As per the estimate by 1 January 2005, the proven natural gas reserve in the country was 2.01 trillion cubic metres. (www.cia.gov.in) In January 2005, Turkmenistan claimed its current recoverable gas resources to be as much as 20.42 trillion cubic meters (tcm). Turkmenistan’s single largest field is situated in Dovletabad. Turkmenistan remains the second largest gas producer in the former Soviet Union after Gazprom. Turkmenistan’s 2005 output was an estimated 63 billion cubic meters (bcm); the bulk of which (45.2 bcm) went to Ukraine, Russia and Iran. (http://www.turkmenistanembassy.org/) Turkmenistan relies exclusively on Russia for its export routes as most of the pipeline network is laid on Russian territory. Among other major exports are liquefied natural gas (LNG) and polypropylene. The proven oil reserve in the country as per the estimate in January 2005, 546 million bbl. In 2004, Turkmenistan’s oil production was 213,700 bbl/day and export was 117,800 bbl/day.

In 2002, the output of crude stood at 9.1 million tons. Consumption of oil totaled 6.8 million tons and exports were reported at 2.9 million tons. National refineries have a combined capacity for 11.8 million tons of crude. Prospected resources of oil reach some 13.5 billion tons, and a half of it is found on the Caspian Sea shelf. Proven reserves make up 160 million tons of that number and exhaustion rate reaches 70.3 per cent. Production of crude is underway at 16 oilfields, with the
Turkmenneft state corporation developing 12 of them. Two biggest oil fields, Goturdepe and Barsagelmez, account for 65 per cent of all proven reserves. Other companies producing oil in Turkmenistan are Lasmo, Mobil and Burren Energy (developing Nebitdag, Karatepe, Burun and Gyzylcum oilfields on the basis of production-sharing agreements), Mobil Exploration (Nebitdag), Dragon Oil (Zhdanov, Celeken), and Turkmenneft Oil consortium (production sharing agreement for the Khazar area). Crude is exported only by sea via the Caspian terminals of Alaja and Ekerem that have the combined transshipment capacity for 3.6 million tons a year. The government’s share in exports of crude comes to 89 per cent. More specifically, the government controls 60 per cent of westward and northwestward exports via Baku, 15 per cent of northern transit exports via Russia, and 25 per cent of southward exports to Neka in Iran, which swaps Turkmen oil for its own in the Persian Gulf. (Check Footnote)

Despite the increased inflow of gas revenue, prospects in the near future are uncertain; widespread internal poverty, the burden of foreign debt, and the unwillingness of the government to adopt market-oriented reforms continue to offset gas-related gains. The 2005 UN Development Program (UNDP) Human Development Report places Turkmenistan in the category of "medium human development" although the unemployment rate may be as high as 70 per cent. (http://www.turkmenistanembassy.org/)
INDIA-TURKMENISTAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

Turkmenistan has proclaimed itself a secular democratic country. Through the UN Resolution of 1995, it attained the status of 'Permanent Neutrality'. It has adopted a policy to promote mutually beneficial non-discriminatory relations with neighbours to ensure a conflict-free environment conducive to stability and economic development of the country. The Republic of Turkmenistan is the member of UN and other international agencies like, CIS, ECO, OIC, NATO-Partnership for Peace Programme, OSCE, NAM, IMF. (www.indianembassy-tm.com)

India has a historical linkage with the Republic of Turkmenistan. Bairam Khan, the mentor of King Akbar was a Turkmen and represents the link between Turkmenistan and India. His son, Abdur Rahim Khan-e-Khana, a renowned philosopher/poet was one of the Navratnas in the Court of Akbar. (Online: Web, http://meaindia.nic.in/foreignrelation/trkmenistan.htm) India’s Turkmenistan connection in the recent days has been traced to India’s first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Nehru accompanied by his daughter Smt. Indira Gandhi, who later became the Prime Minister of India, visited Ashgabat in June 1955 on his way to Tashkent. (www.indianembassy-tm.com) India recognised Turkmenistan on 26 December 1991. India established its Embassy in Ashgabat, the capital of Turkmenistan, on 30 January 1994. India has a resident Ambassador in Ashgabat since then. (www.indianembassy-tm.com)
President Saparmurat Niyazov of the Republic of Turkmenistan visited India from 18 to 20 April 1992. During the visit, a set of documents was signed, which laid the basis for the establishment of bilateral relationship. (Sahai, 2005, p. 42)

Indian Prime Minister P. V. Narasimha Rao paid a three-day official visit to Turkmenistan from 19 to 21 September 1995. Besides addressing the Turkmen Parliament, Prime Minister Rao had cordial meetings with President Saparmurat Niyazov. He was conferred an honorary membership of the Turkmen Academy of Sciences. He was impressed with the appreciation of the Turkmen leadership about India’s non-political and non-ideological objectives in Turkmenistan and held the view that this is a positive point towards stable and meaningful partnership between the two republics. (Puri, 1997, p. 250) Prime Minister Rao praised the neutral attitude of Turkmen Republic as well as the secular and modern temper of the Turkmen people. On the other Turkmen President Turkmenbashi Niyazov assured support to India’s bid for permanent membership in the UN Security Council. Niyazov’s opposition to attempts by Pakistan and other actors to politicize Central Asian regional fora and formation of an Islamic Emirate further reflected the commonality of attitude and interests of the two countries. Niyazov also held the view that the issue of Kashmir should be resolved with the Shimla Agreement of 1972 (Puri, 1997, pp. 250-251)

During Prime Minister Rao’s visit, five major agreements were signed, which are described in the following:
1. cooperation between the Foreign Offices of both the republics; training of Turkmen diplomats in India;

2. Extension of Cultural Exchange Programme in education, science and technology till December 1996;

3. encouragement and protection of bilateral investments;

4. setting up of a joint commission on trade and economics;

5. extending a second credit line of ten million US dollars in addition to the five million US dollars extended in March 1995 for purchasing items for and from joint ventures. (Puri, 1997, p. 251)

The Indo-Turkmen joint communiqué spoke of the concern of both the republics over continued resort to terrorism and hostile propaganda in the South Asian context - the first such forthright expression by any Central Asian Republic. (Puri, 1997, p. 251)

The Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, Shikhmuradov, during his visit to New Delhi in June 1996, added a new dimension to the Indo-Turkmenistan relations. The visiting Turkmen leader, Shikhmuradov addressed a special gathering of Indian strategic community, organised by the government-run Institute of Defence and Analyses (IDSA) in New Delhi and called for an urgent need to resume regular Track-II dialogue between India and Turkmenistan in order to examine new opportunities and options for bilateral relations. The first Indo-Turkmenistan bilateral dialogue jointly organised by the IDSA and Turkmenistan's Foreign Ministry in Ashgabat on 18 October 1996 was the first of its kind with any Central Asian
Republic, which proved to be a major step in the direction of promoting understanding on the key issues of national and international peace and security. (Stobdan, December 1996, pp. 1266-1267)

Turkmen President Niyazov came to India as part of his second official visit from 25-26 February 1997.

An Indian scientific delegation representing the Central Electronics Limited (CEL) and the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) visited Turkmenistan in June 1998 to explore the possibilities of cooperation in the solar energy sector. (Mavlonov, p. 32) A delegation from Indian Oil Corporation also visited Turkmenistan and held discussions with the Deputy Minister of Oil and Gas Industry of Turkmen Republic. A three member delegation from Punjab Agri-Export Corporation visited Turkmenistan in November 1998 with a proposal to set up joint commercial farming for which a Protocol of Intent was signed. (Online-Web, www.indianembassy.org)

India's External Affairs Minister, Jaswant Singh visited Turkmenistan in May 1999. Agreements on setting up of a Working Group on Energy and a Protocol for the development of cooperation between the ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries were signed during the visit. The then Turkmenistan Foreign Minister, Mr. Boris Shikhmuradov, visited India for Foreign Minister level consultations in April 2000. (www.indianembassy-tm.com)

Shri E. Ahamed, Hon'ble Minister of State for External Affairs and co-chair of the India-Turkmenistan Inter-Governmental commission on Trade-Economic
Scientific and Technological Cooperation led the Indian delegation for the 1st meeting of the Inter-Governmental Commission held in Ashgabat (Turkmenistan) on 2-3 October 2003. Hon’ble Minister was accompanied by a high level delegation with representatives from Ministries of External Affairs, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Departments of Commerce and Science and Technology, State Trading Corporation and Public Sector Oil and Gas companies, namely ONGC Videsh and Gail India Limited.

On his arrival in Ashgabat Shri Ahamed was received by his counterpart and co-Chair of the Turkmen side of the Inter-Governmental commission Mr. Rashid Meredov, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan. Shri Ahamed had extensive discussions with Mr. Meredov on all aspects of the bilateral relationship as well as issues of regional cooperation such as India’s participation in the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan (TAP) gas pipeline project. The Turkmen Foreign Minister conveyed the support of H.E. Mr. Saparmurat Niyazov, President of Turkmenistan to greater Indian involvement in various sectors in Turkmenistan, notably in the hydrocarbon sector. Mr. Meredov informed Shri Ahamed that Turkmenistan supports India becoming a member of TAP.

Shri Ahamed addressed the plenary session of the Inter-Governmental Commission wherein he stressed the need for India becoming a development partner for Turkmenistan. The Inter-Governmental Commission meeting was conducted through meetings of various sub-groups including the 1st meeting of the India-Turkmenistan Joint Working Group (JWG) on Hydrocarbons. The JWG on
Hydrocarbons discussed possible areas of bilateral cooperation such as India's interest in participation in prospecting and eventual exploration and production in the offshore Caspian blocks of Turkmenistan. India also agreed to facilitate the issue of permission for Turkmenistan's designated carrier to fly to additional points of call in India namely Ahmedabad and Kochi. India also offered to establish in Ashgabat an India-Turkmenistan Centre for Information Technology for capacity building of nationals of Turkmenistan in the information technology area. Both sides resolved to make efforts for intensifying commercial relations through trade related joint ventures. The Turkmenistan side agreed to facilitate imports of Indian pharmaceutical products in Turkmenistan. Cooperation in science and technology particularly in seismic studies as well as in combating desertification was also agreed upon. A joint protocol outlining the specific areas of cooperation was signed at the conclusion of the Inter Governmental Commission by the two Co-Chairs. (http://www.meaindia.nic.in/)

On 18 October 2005, Rajiv Sikri, Secretary East (Eurasia Division) of the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India visited Ashgabat and held a number of high level meetings. His negotiations with the Turkmen delegation covered a wide range of issues including cooperation in oil and gas, fuel and energy, transportation, textile, agriculture, science, education, culture and healthcare sectors. The Indian envoy stressed that the bilateral relations had grown slowly but steadily because of the historical and cultural ties between the two countries and the people of both the countries besides the policy of peace, friendship, good neighbourhood and cooperation actively pursued by Turkmen President Niyazov. (Mavlonov, p. 34) Both the sides expressed readiness to expand interaction in education through
implementation of joint educational and research programmes. Creation of joint training centres was discussed. One such training centre now works successfully at Turkmen Polytechnic Institute in Ashgabat.

Prof. Saifuddin Soz, Union Minister of Water Resources led the Indian delegation to the state funeral of H.E. Mr Saparmurat Niyazov, the late President of Turkmenistan, held on 24 December 2006 at Ashgabat. A large number of world leaders, including President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan, President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan, President Emomali Rahmonov of Tajikistan, Prime Minister Shaukat Aziz of Pakistan and Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov of Russia attended the funeral. Prof. Soz laid a wreath at the coffin of the late President, who lay in state at the Turkmenbashy Presidential Palace in the heart of the city. Prof. Soz was accompanied by Shri R.P. Kaushik, Ambassador of India to Turkmenistan and other senior officials of the Government of India. He conveyed India’s deepest condolences on the sad demise of the Turkmen President to the family members of the late President.

Prof. Soz also met the acting President of Turkmenistan, H.E. Mr Gurbanguly Berdymuhammedov and assured that India looked to Turkmenistan as a trusted friend and was interested in promoting and strengthening the traditional bonds of friendship that bind us. (http://www.meaindianic.in/)

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Turkmenistan, Mr Rashid Meredov led a high-level delegation comprising of five Ministers – of Oil & Gas, Education, Trade, Culture and Protection of Nature – to India on 20-22 January, 2008.
Mr Meredov co-chaired the Second Session of the India-Turkmenistan Inter-Governmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technological Cooperation along with the Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri E. Ahamed. During the visit, Mr. Meredov also met the External Affairs Minister, Prime Minister and the Vice President. The other delegation members held meetings with relevant Ministries and organisations to discuss bilateral cooperation in respective spheres.

The Inter-Governmental Commission reviewed bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade & investment, hydrocarbons, education, science & technology and culture since the first meeting of the Commission in October 2006 in Ashgabat. The two sides agreed on further efforts for expanding and strengthening cooperation, particularly greater exchange of business delegations, participation in trade fairs/exhibitions, increase in banking ties, encouraging investments, discussions on collaborative ventures between energy companies as a follow up of the transit visit of the Minister of Petroleum & Natural Gas to Ashgabat in November 2007, scientific exchanges in areas such as seismology and astronomy, realizing the business potential in the infrastructure sector, developing transport linkages and greater cultural exchanges in the context of close historical and civilization linkages between the two countries. Cooperation in higher-education and human resource development was also discussed in view of ongoing reforms by the Turkmenistan government in these areas.

A Protocol on the conclusion of the Inter-Governmental Commission was signed at the end of the meeting. The visiting delegation handed over an invitation from the President of Turkmenistan to the Vice President of India to visit Turkmenistan later in 2006. (http://www.meaindia.nic.in/)
Indian Vice President Hamid Ansari's visit to Turkmenistan from 4 to 10 April 2008 opened up new vistas of relationship. The Vice President's visit has opened up new hopes for cooperation especially in the hydrocarbon sector with Turkmenistan.

Ansari reassured CARs about India's co-operation in the information and technology sector as well as in the sphere of education. Hamid Ansari discussed with the Turkmen leaders issues relating to oil and gas pipelines. The Indian Vice President admitted that there are certain obstacles for cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector, especially given that Turkmenistan is a landlocked country. But he added that these hurdles can be overcome through cooperation. In this context, he mentioned that certain routes have already been opened up while others are being considered, like the route that starts from the Iranian port of Bandar Abbas and runs to the Turkmenistan border. The other is the North-South corridor that runs from Bandar Abbas to the Caspian Sea and the proposed Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline. He noted that these are feasible propositions, that technical work is on and soon the issues involved will be resolved. (Nivedita Das Kundu, Online: Web)

India and Turkmenistan on 4 April 2008 signed a historic pact to open avenues for bilateral cooperation in the Hydrocarbon sector. The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed by Minister of State for External Affairs E Ahmed and Turkmenistan's Deputy Premier and Minister for Oil and Gas, Tachbordy Tagiev. The MoU provides for cooperation in the upstream and downstream areas and also paves the way for Indian companies to be partners in the development of liquefaction facilities. The pact was signed after the delegation level talks between the Vice
President Mohammad Hamid Ansari and Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. The leaders of the two countries reviewed the whole gamut of relations with a special focus on energy, security and other issues. ("India, Turkmenistan Sign MoU in Gas Sector", Online: Web, http://www.dailyindia.com/show/230168.php/India-Turkmenistan-sign-MoU-in-gas-)

Table 3

High Level Visits from Turkmenistan to India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20-22 January 2008</td>
<td>Rashid Meredov, Deputy PM &amp; Foreign Minister, Turkmenistan</td>
<td>Second Session of the India-Turkmenistan Inter-Governmental Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 April 2000</td>
<td>Boris Shikhmuradov, Foreign Minister</td>
<td>High level meetings, discussions on regional issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1997</td>
<td>Boris Shikhmuradov, Vice Premier &amp; Foreign Minister</td>
<td>High level meetings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25-26 February 1997</td>
<td>Saparmurat Niyazov, President</td>
<td>MOU on celebration of the 500th anniversary of Bairam Khan in India &amp; Turkmenistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 July 1996</td>
<td>Boris Skikhmuradov, Deputy PM and Foreign Minister</td>
<td>MOU on trade and transit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 1995</td>
<td>Boris Skikhmuradov, Deputy PM and Foreign Minister</td>
<td>Trilateral MOU on trade and transit (along with Iranian Foreign Minister)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-20 April 1992</td>
<td>S. Niyazov, President</td>
<td>State visit to India, Agreements on cooperation signed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4
High Level Visits from India to Turkmenistan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Visitor</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4-6 April 2008</td>
<td>Hamid Ansari, Vice President of India</td>
<td>Cooperation in the hydrocarbon sector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2006</td>
<td>Saifuddin Soz, Minister of Water Resources</td>
<td>Indian representative at the funeral ceremony of E. Rahmanov</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2005</td>
<td>Rajiv Shikri</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2003</td>
<td>E. Ahamed, Minister of State for External Affairs</td>
<td>Plenary session of Inter Governmental Commission between India and Turkmenistan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1999</td>
<td>Jaswant Singh, External Affairs Minister</td>
<td>Turkmenistan : Agreements on setting up of a Working Group on Energy and cooperation between the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the two countries were signed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 1998</td>
<td>Som Pal, Minister of State for Agriculture</td>
<td>Indo-Turkmen joint venture – Ajanta Pharma Turkmenderman was inaugurated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 1995</td>
<td>P. V. Narasimha Rao, Prime Minister</td>
<td>High level meetings and cooperation agreements</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clearly understood from the high level diplomatic exchanges between India and Uzbekistan and India and Turkmenistan that India is sincerely trying to maintain warm relationship with these Central Asian Republics. These two Central Asian countries remain keys to India’s policy towards the Central Asian region for economic cooperation and efforts towards achieving energy security through the abundant natural and hydrocarbon reserves.