CHAPTER VII

CENTRAL ASIA'S CO-OPERATION WITH INDIA IN POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC SPHERES SINCE 1991.
Sound Indo-Central Asian ties will take some time to materialise. It requires both sides to work hard to promote and cement their relations. Till now both India and Central Asia have exchanged official and even ministerial good-will visits. They have also concluded many agreements to enhance the scope of their cooperation and mutual understanding. On July 22, 1993 India and Kazakhstan agreed to accelerate cooperation in civil aviation and science and technology. The latter reiterated its interest in space co-operation particularly Indian involvement in the Kazakh cosmodrome. India has offered a credit of $20 million to Kazakhstan. The Kazakh delegation also held meetings with the Confederation of Indian Industries, the FICCI, Exim Bank, MMTC and Indian Trade Promotion Organisation. Visit of the then President of India, Shri Shankar Dayal Sharma to Turkey 1993 was a step to improve relations with Turkey speaking and Turkic republics. Turkey is gate way to the west and also to Central Asian states. India has already received positive response from Iran to approach Central Asian States which resulted in signing triennial agreements in Feb. 1993.

In the last week of May 1993 then Indian Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao made a visit to Central Asian countries

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1. Arshi Khan, "India's Relations with Central Asia: With Special Reference to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan", Third World Impact, vol.iv, no.44 Aug, 1993, pp.6-9.
and put special emphasis on Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. When the Prime Minister moved to Almaty, he invited even India’s high diplomatic officials from outside Kazakhstan. This shows India’s keen interest in Central Asia particularly in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

Kazakhstan is the third nuclear power after Russia and Ukraine in the former Soviet Union. Russia’s relations with Ukraine is now bitter whereas its friendship with Kazakhstan has been improving positively. Many Kazakh scientists are still serving the nuclear and other sophisticated laboratories of Russia. Kazakhs have a strong sense of ethnicity and are always prepared to serve their country.²

Kazakhstan is mineraly a very rich country, geographically very large area, economically potential, educationally advanced and historically famous. Kazakhs are also proud of their culture and distinct customs.

Indian films, cinema artists and Hindi songs are quite popular in Kazakhstan. Kazakhs view India as a pluralist society. They accept that India has been a birth-place of many intellectuals, poets and important personalities. It is an open fact that Kazakh people, students, teachers and

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other professionals in Almaty remember and love India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and artists Raj Kapoor and Mithun Chakravarty etc. Particularly Kazakh youth are highly enthusiastic about Nehru and India's liberal tradition. Indian tea, coffee, clothes, Hindi songs and Indian classical dances are very popular in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan. These are also known in other Central Asian republics too.

Kirghyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan are also interested in India. Kirghyz are comparatively soft and liberal than Kazakhs in manners and behaviour. Uzbekistan is a very interesting country. Uzbek people know India better than anyone in the entire erstwhile Soviet Union. The Uzbeks have been using Indian toothpaste, tea, coffee and many other items. One Uzbek Ibrahim who teaches Uzbek in Ankara, says that King Babur belonged to Shhar Khan (Ferghana Valley, Uzbekistan). Prof. Khidayatov, Chief of the chair of Modern History at the Tashkent University said that Babur belonged to Ferghana Valley. According to him, the Taj Mahal at Agra was built by the Uzbek masters from Samarkand.3

3. Arshi Khan, op.cit, pp.6-9.

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People of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Turkey claim that Babur was a Turk and not Mughal. They, particularly Uzbeks, claim that Mughal pertains to Muglistan (old Central Asia) Timur Lang (originally Timur Barlas) belonged to Qashqadarya Vilayati near Afghanistan border. He had four or five wives belonging to different ethnic stocks, mainly Turk and Mongol. Babur's (great grandson of Timur) ancestry is traced to the "Turk" wife. Turkic republics in general and Uzbeks in particular feel that it was not a Mughlia sultanate but Babur empire was pure Turkic.

India's past deserves a golden chapter in the history of Indo-Central Asian relations. If Turkey and Iran claim to have strong ethnic and cultural affinity with Central Asian countries, India is not more far behind. It has centuries old relations with Turkistan which is now Central Asia. Culture, trade and commerce were the major areas of interaction between India and Turkistan (Central Asia). The ancient Silk Route had facilitated all the trade routes from Europe to the Middle East and from China to India. Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, Shehrisabz, Margelan etc. were situated along the Silk Route. Prof. Khidayatov said that Indo-Central Asian relations are very old and strong. He claimed that one can find Indian culture in Uzbekistan and other Central Asian states. To him, historical monuments in Delhi and Agra give the evidence of
Indo-Central Asian age old relations. With the Arabs, they participated in the cultural flowering which was the dynamic outcome of the expansion of Islam. The centre of an extraordinary Persian-Islamic renaissance from the ninth to the sixteenth centuries. With the riches gained through vigorous trade along the East-West silk road, a successor of rulers patronised the arts and literature, painting and architecture. The Registan Square in Samarkand, which was to influence the architectural traditions of the Mogul and Ottoman dynasties is sitting testament to the cultural influence which one can find in Agra in India.

Central Asians, particularly Turkic elites are well known to have brought Persian culture and Turkic heritage to India. D.D. Kosambi, an important historian, and many others have maintained that a large stock of the Aryans had migrated from Central Asia to India during the ancient period. India also possesses a rich collection of Persianised-Turkic monuments, mosques, palaces and other architectures. During the period of Alauddin Khilji, about a hundred family of Turkic officials settled in Gujarat and mixed up with the local people.


After 1947, India established strong ties with Moscow. All five republics - Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghyzstan and Tajikistan had attended the Asian Relations Conference in April 1947 in New Delhi. The first Indian Prime Minister, late Jawahar Lal Nehru visited Ashkhabad, Almaty, Tashkent and Samarkand in June 1998. The first President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad visited Dushanbe in 1960 and Dr. Zakir Hussain in 1968. Late Rajiv Gandhi, former Prime Minister of India, had gone to Bishkek (Kirghyzstan) in May 1985. Besides, there has been a tradition of exchanging scholars, artists and students between India and Central Asia.

Strongest relations between India and the erstwhile Soviet union for more than six decades crystallised mutual ties between India and Central Asian nations. In late January, 1992, an Indian good-will delegation which included Mr. Ram Niwas Mirdha, Prof. Rasheeduddin Khan, Mr. M. J. Akbar and five others visited Central Asia to exhibit India's sympathy and a sense of cooperation for the new-born Central Asian states.6

As early as in February 1992 the President of Kazakhstan Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev visited India as his

first visit abroad after Kazakhstan declared independence. He supported the principle of Panchsheel to ensure peace and stability. Both the countries signed a five year framework agreement to cooperate in trade, economic relations, science, media, culture, educations and technology. The agreements also included provisions for promoting contracts for training through exchange of visits of business delegations, participation in trade fairs, workshops and exchange of information.

Just after the independence of Uzbekistan in September 1991, India established its consulate in Tashkent. The speaker of Uzbekistan's Parliament, Mr. S.M. Yuldashev and others visited India and its Parliament to observe the functioning of Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic of India. In November 1992, an Indian trade delegation, headed by the Deputy Minister for Commerce Salman Khurshid, visited Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kirghystan and Turkmenistan to offer the services of India's economic and administrative skills. He announced a credit of $30 million to them. Just before the abortive coupe in Moscow in August 1991, the Uzbek president, Islam Karimov visited India and even invited the young flourishing industrialist

Rounaq Singh to advise him on his country's economic affair. Prof. Khidayatov told that Uzbekistan wants Indian industrialists to invest in its economic projects. He said with confidence that Central Asia could be a good market for India. He has laid down a tentative plan with a map to establish territorial connection between Delhi and Tashkent through a wide network of railway system. According to him if railways connect Meshhed (northeast Iran) and Zahedan (southeast Iran) which is merely 800 Km. long, then it is quite easy to connect New Delhi with Tashkent railway system. To him, only a two day journey would be sufficient for a person to reach Delhi from Tashkent and two and half days journey between Istanbul and Tashkent. The main aim, according to him, is to create a single economic territory and to create a common market of Central Asia and Middle East. 8

While discussing trade and commerce, the present handicaps and future potentials have to be kept in mind. Central Asian republics like India as well are short of hard currency and a flexible system has to be evoked where either the business is conducted on barter bass or against valid Letter of Credit. Commodities have to be identified

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8. Prof. Khidayatov, Chief of the chair, Deptt. Institute of Modern History, at the Tashkent University, Tashkent Uzbekistan, ibid.,
for counter trade and it is for the Reserve Bank of India and the Ministry of Commerce to devise a system through which trade could be carried on in convertible currency uninterrupted for mutual benefit. Economically Uzbekistan is rich in gold, cotton and silk and Kazakhstan in ferrous and non-ferrous metals and nuclear armament. Kazakhstan also has huge iron deposits, copper reserves, world's largest chromite deposits which is considered the best in terms of chromium oxide contents. Kazakhstan republic's exports nearly 250 products to about 90 countries. It would like to import transport and farm equipments, machine tools, industrial equipment, potassic the and nitrogenous fertilizers. It also prefers Indian experts to train its personnel in stock markets, banking, management, administration and other fields.

Joint ventures are also possible in mining, oil exploration, textiles, leather, food processing, project exports and consultancy works. India and Uzbekistan have agreed at Tashkent to set up a joint commission to monitor and assist development in Uzbekistan in high technology fields. India has offered training facilities in foreign trade and banking sectors.

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On a five-days official visit to India, in 1993 (mid February), Tajikistan's Prime Minister Abdumalik Abdulla Janov expressed a strong desire to improve economic and political ties with India. The two countries signed six agreements on economic and technical cooperation, and cooperation in culture, art, science, education, sport and mass media. Tajikistan requires India's help to develop tourism industry. Ninety three percent of the total area of Tajikistan is mountainous. Businessmen like Mr. R.K. Malhotra, the Managing Director of the Surya Hotel, have strongly favoured investment in Tajikistan and other Central Asian States.

A thirteen member delegation from the CII led by Mr. Rohington Aga, Chairman of Thermax Limited, visited Uzbekistan from 16-20 March 1993. The delegation included representatives from Tata Exports, Tisco, Godrej, IMTMA, DCM Toyota, Ashok Leyland, Business Universal Incorporated, Thermax, Bharat Fitzwerner and Wipro Infotech Limited. The delegation members discussed many useful areas of co-operation such as manufacture of steel furniture, computerisation of the national bank, establishment of car garages and service centres, supply of trucks, modernisation of cotton industry, textile machinery, transfer of technology for extraction of oil from cotton-seed, joint
venture in leather industry, supply of injection moulding machines for plastic products, conversion units for usage in diesel-powered trucks and mining technology. Thermax Limited signed a contract worth one million US Dollars.¹⁰

Now this is an opportune time to expedite all efforts to promote economic ties with India's Central Asian neighbours. The Government of India and India business houses are urgently required to show an action of commitment and determination to herald a new era of cooperation. Central Asia may be a good market for Indian entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the Central Asian heads of governments need to realise India's potentialities including, liberal economy, secularism, and representative democracy and welfare orientated system. India's relations with the Central Asian states are growing rapidly. All Central Asian Presidents have visited India, besides delegations of governments and non-governmental agencies. There is genuine interest on both sides for exploring possibilities for economic co-operation involving scientific and financial institutions, hotel industries, educational and cultural exchange, TV and media technologies etc.

President Islam Karimov, during his visit to India in Jan'94 said it was unfortunate that Indian businessmen are very cautious about setting up joint ventures with Uzbekistan. He pointed out that of the 960 joint ventures currently underway in his country, a mere 14 were with India, and even out of this only 6 were operational.\textsuperscript{11} Indian businessmen point out that it is not easy to do business with their counterparts in the Central Asian states because they have no idea of how to conduct trading operation and in some instances were not even aware of letters of credit.

The Central Asian states are rich in mineral resources including gold, natural gas and strategic minerals, like uranium. India can provide assistance in these areas. They are also heavily dependent on the import of consumer goods, and this should be another opportunity for Indian businessmen. Indian products may find easy acceptance for a wide variety of manufactured goods not have to face stiff quality control as in the European markets. From the trade point of view India cannot afford to lose the untapped potential of a vast Central Asian market. In the service sector too, India has ample scope. Basic banking concepts are not known.

\textsuperscript{11} Foreign Affairs Record, vol xxxx no.1 January 1994, pp.11-12.
India can help build the infrastructure. According to a top Kazakh official, "We are still paying for our goods with commodities." It is very complex to pay in dollars. We don't know how to convert our currency into dollars. The native Central Asian labour is low skilled, and with the migration of Russians there is an acute shortage of skilled labour". In this connection India various agreements for practical action were signed. For example, a specific number of students / Industrial persons from these republics could be invited for higher education in India, cultural troops could be exchanged on a regular basis, the number of air flights has to be increased to facilitate travelling, and trade fairs organised on reciprocal basis.

India can provide opportunities for the Central Asian States with regard to the training of managerial and skilled personnel. In the hospitality industry too Indian can help build hotels, and a dearth of these inhibits Western businessmen from venturing into this area. Besides this, the basic scenic beauty and also a number of ancient cities and monuments can help attract tourists to Central Asia. The snow capped mountains of the Central Asian states also provide possibilities for opening winter sports resorts. India has the know-how for the tourist industry and it is

already involved in the construction of hotels in Samarkand, Bukhara and Tashkent. Even in surface transport system India can help. For example, even today there is no direct road or rail linking north and south Kyrghyzstan and one has to take a detour via Uzbekistan.

The Central Asian states are economically weak, in the absence of a strong Russia to provide them with big subsidies. They are all therefore trying to establish bilateral relations with different nations to find ways and means of economic cooperation. They have even established ties with Israel for the drip irrigation project. So India should not lose out on the opportunities available in the vast Central Asian market. If it can overcome the short run problem, there are good prospects for wide ranging economic ties between India and its Central Asian neighbours.

India's Cooperation during Post Soviet Period 1991:

On 27 January 1992 an Indian delegation began its meeting by calling on the Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Mr. Mualov. India conveyed the greetings of the Prime Minister, the Governments of India and the people of India on Uzbekistan's declaration of independence. India's ties with Uzbekistan are historic and reach out to many centuries. Even prior to the coming of Islam to Central Asia, the Buddhist Kushan Empire of India, whose famous
ruler was Kanishka, had intimate links with Central Asia. Indeed parts of central Asia were in his Empire.

During the last seven decades after the October Revolution of 1917, followed by the formation of the Soviet Union, India consolidated its contacts with Uzbekistan, specially as was evident from the fact that in his first official visit to the Soviet Union in 1955, Jawaharlal Nehru paid his visit to Tashkent. His successor Lal Bahadur Shastri, second prime Minister of India came to Tashkent and signed the famous peace agreement with Pakistan in 1965. Unfortunately he died in Tashkent, where his memorial statue is located at a prominent place. The role of successive Prime Ministers of India, specially Jawaharlal Nehru, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, have been to promote deeper friendship and cooperation with Central Asian Republics.

In November 1992, a trade delegation headed by Deputy Minister for Commerce Salman Khurshid, visited Uzbekistan to offer its economic and administrative skills. He announced a credit of $30 million to them and invited Indian business community to advice them on economic affair and wanted Indian industrialists to invest in economic project. Uzbekistan prefers Indian experts to train their personnel in banking, stock market, financial sector management administration and other fields with the
confidence that Central Asia could be a good market for India. 13

The Prime Minister of Uzbekistan has emphasized the special regard in which they hold friendly India about whose role and place in history Central Asians are equally proud. He was happy that India has decided to establish full fledged diplomatic relations at the embassy level in Tashkent. (It was officially announced in New Delhi that the present consulate-General of India in Tashkent shall be elevated to the position of a full fledged Embassy of India on 15 February 1992).

The same sentiment was expressed by the Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan Mr. Abdurazzakov. After the usual exchange of pleasantries the Foreign Minister told the Indian delegation led by Mr. R.N. Mirdha that India was one of the first countries to recognise Uzbekistan's independence. He said that they are ready to sign the protocol for the opening of Embassies. He also admitted of having no experience in the past of establishing independent relations with other countries and therefore proposed to send about 10 members of Uzbek Foreign Ministry to India to obtain training in building diplomatic

relations. (On the Indian delegation's return flight to India on 4 February'92 two Uzbek officials accompanied them to spend some time with the officials of India's Ministry of External Affairs.). Abdurazzakov further highlighted considerable help India can extend in many spheres, political, economic, scientific, educational, cultural etc. He mentioned that about fifty countries have already recognised Uzbekistan and about twenty are interested in opening embassies. He particularly mentioned the fact that their main concern is the improvement of their economy. Inflation has increased, prices are also high. Despite increasing the salary scales and wages recently, the cost of living is quite unmanageable. They would like to work out an effective system of market economy but they do not have experience to do so. In this regard also the Foreign Minister said he was looking to help from India specially in areas of managerial services, investments and blueprints for working out a pattern of mixed economy. 14

Regarding the question of possible increase of Muslim fundamentalism, he said that while certain groups are trying to take advantage of bad economic situation but his assessment is that compared to other Central Asian

Republics, situation in Uzbekistan is relatively more stable. If Uzbekistan can improve its economy then the slogans of the fundamentalists will not have much effect.\textsuperscript{15}

In its discussion with the Foreign Minister the Indian delegation emphasised the need not only for bilateral cooperation between India and Uzbekistan, but also the need to strengthen jointly the process of South-South cooperation especially in the light of the difficulties being faced in the negotiations between the North and the South.\textsuperscript{16}

India has undertaken the construction of 3 hotels in Uzbekistan. India's private sector namely the Tata's are building a hotel in Tashkent whose construction began in 1988. Larsen Turbo Ltd. are building two hotels, one in Samarkand and another in Bukhara, which are of the class 4 international level. For these hotels, construction started in 1987 and should have been completed in 1991 but because of several difficulties have been delayed.

Indian delegation emphasised that India has an advanced telecommunication system as well in which it has developed

\textsuperscript{15} ibid.; also on fundamentalism, V.D. Chopra, "Ethnic resurgence in Central Asia and its Wider Implications", \textit{Link}, August 9, 1992, New Delhi, pp. 28-30.

\textsuperscript{16} \textit{Foreign Affairs Record}, vol xxxix, no. 5, May 1993. pp.163-164.
its own design. Indeed India has been competing successfully in this field in countries like Kuwait and Saudi Arabia who have taken up Indian telecommunication system after international bidding from other countries.

Asked as to what is his own perception, about the possible areas of cooperation with India, the Uzbek foreign Minister mentioned that they would like India to help them in several areas of their economy, in promotion of science and technology, especially in telecommunication in rural areas and in managerial service etc.\textsuperscript{17}

The Indian delegation visited the Friendship Society of Uzbekistan, where the President of the Society Madam Sultanova emphasised the importance of establishing an Indo-Uzbek Friendship Society in order to promote people to people contact especially in the diverse field of culture, science, technology and education etc.

The delegation then paid a visit to the Institute of Oriental Studies in Uzbekistan and had discussions with Mrs. Adalet, Vice-Chancellor and Prof. Taushmira and Prof. Shamatov. They informed the delegation that they have a five year course leading to Masters Degree. It was

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\textit{\textsuperscript{17} Foreign Affairs Record, Indo-Uzbek Agreements, vol.xxxix no.7, July 1993, pp.237-238.}
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emphasised to them that considerable cooperation is possible in many branches of knowledge between India and Uzbekistan. India not only has 125 Universities, many medical and engineering colleges but also some advanced centres of specialisation in professional courses. There are 5 Indian Institutes of Management and 5 Indian Institutes of Technology. Agreements can be worked out for exchange of scholars in these institutions or to provide special training to Uzbek scholars specially on management, computer applications and other areas of technologies. 18

On 28 January 1992 the delegation met Dr. Alimov, Minister of Higher and Secondary Education. He was very keen in developing cooperation between India and Uzbekistan in higher education. He said that they have 50 institutes of higher learning and 7 universities. However, he mentioned that in some field of knowledge they have practically no expertise and it is in these areas that they would seek effective cooperation with India. Some of these areas are the problem of building market economy, the establishment of financial institutions, the working out of management systems for an open market system and also to promote

studies in international law and international organisations. He was hopeful that Indian side would help them in this regard. He suggested that both countries should work out an agreement specially in areas like medical, engineering and fundamental sciences. He emphasised how impressed the Uzbek people have been of India's cultural heritage and that they look forward to India for training of their scholars in social sciences like political science and economics and also in industrial studies. It was also mentioned that earlier they followed German education system, adapted by the Russians, but now they are trying to change to the American system of education. 19

In the meeting at the Ministry of Culture with the Minister and the Deputy Foreign Minister, 9 Indian delegates were told that they have already worked out a new programme in the area of education and culture and they would like India to examine their new plan and to suggest the areas in which Indo-Uzbek cooperation is possible. They mentioned by the year end they would like to send 3 professional groups

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19. Foreign Affairs Record ibid, also J.N.Dixit; "Time to Reach Out: India has failed to capitalise on its traditional ties with Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan", Outlook, July 24, 1996, New Delhi, pp. 26-27.
to India - a dance group, a group of folk artists and the famous Tashkent circus.

The Minister of Culture also underlined the need for preparing an encyclopedia of culture covering the ancient and medieval ages in which Central Asia and India had been close to each other.

On 29 January 1992 the delegation flew to Almaty, the capital of Kazakhstan. Its first visit was to Al-Farabi University which is the state university of Kazakhstan named after famous Medieval philosopher and encyclopedist Al-Farabi. It met Mr. Kuznetsov, First Pro-Rector of the university and also the Dean of International Relations. The university was established in 1936 and is one of the oldest institution in Kazakhstan. It has 13 faculties, 16,000 students and about 800 teachers including 100 Professors and about 500 Associate Professors. The faculties include those of law and history, philosophy, journalism, economics, sociology and oriental studies apart from facilities of biology, physics, mathematics, applied mathematics, chemistry and geography. They have joint research arrangement in cosmic radiation with the USA. They have international contacts with USA, Germany, France, Scandinavian countries and many joint research projects are in operation. The Rector mentioned that some of their
difficult problems are those of increasing cost for purchase of scientific instrument and for conducting experiments, inadequacy of fellowship for students which has recently been increased from 160 roubles to 550 roubles. There are several foreign students, the present number being about 40 from 30 countries including India. He was particular to emphasize that the Indian students have left a positive impression on them as being serious minded, hardworking and disciplined. About 7 students from India are still on the rolls of the university.  

They are keen to establish contact with Indian Universities. They do not have the faculty of medicine and agriculture and hence would like cooperation with India in these areas.

It was emphasized that they would like to have a joint cultural agreement so that students of India are able to pursue study by payment of fees which is now being levied on all foreign students. They are eager to have India's help in the development of computer science, banking methods and studies of economy and finance. They would like Indian specialists in these areas to visit them and help them. They have an India club called Shanti in which Indian dance

and music is learned and displayed.

Indian delegation informed them that India is also keen to work out a mutually beneficial cultural and educational agreement with Kazakhstan. It was suggested that some senior university professors should visit India and see the institutions of learning and then identify the areas in which they would like to have high priority in cooperation.

The Rector informed that they are now changing their education system and would be having degrees like BA and MA in India. They consider India's experience of much help to them. He also suggested that they would like to revise text books especially in social science and history and that they look forward to India to help write their history books.21

The delegation visited the Kazakh Friendship Society and met their President Madam Zeenat Ameerkhanova and other active members of the society. It was emphasized that there is a need for the establishment of Friendship Society between India and Kazakhstan on reciprocal basis. They mentioned how the India club called Shanti has been actively engaged in learning Indian arts, music, and dance. About 50

persons take active interest in the activities of their club. They are eager to establish a cinema hall and a library on India. With great enthusiasm they said that Kazakh people have deep feelings and respect for Indian culture. An Indian shop named Ganga is quite popular among the people of Almaty.

A very active member of the Shanti Club, Madam Zaiton Masuma has been organising variety of Indian folk dances and teaching students cine music on her own without any guidance from any Indian Guru or teacher. She expressed a desire for special relations with old friends like India. Few commercial organisations especially from Kerala have helped them to acquire some Indian artefacts and handicrafts. They look forward to greater social and cultural interaction between India and Kazakhstan.22

The Kazakh Information Centre which is a collective of journalists called Kayataq was very instructive. Kaytaq is the state's news agency as a counter part of the Russia's Tass Agency. The Indian delegation met Mr. Ahmad Alimov Amengidi, Director of Kaytaq who mentioned that in the past his agency was part of Tass and now they are planning to

22. ibid., also Madhavan Palat, "India and Central Asia", World Focus, vol. 14, no. 3-4, March-april 1993, pp. 34-36.
build their own independent channel of communication. They are interested to establish direct contact with Indian agencies like PTI and UNI. The director mentioned that presently they are passing through a most difficult period psychologically and organisationally. He said some people in haste would like to solve all the problems in one stroke. However they are planning to develop their new institution with the help of countries like India.

Discussing about the internal situation in the republic the Director and other journalists informed that the situation in Kazakhstan is quite satisfactory despite new changes. No extremist elements either of the religious fundamentalists kind or political militants exist in large number. While economy is in a bad shape now but thanks to their abundant mineral resources and new economic plans they hope to restructure the economy at a faster speed. They mentioned that relations in the past with the central authority in Moscow were on the low side. They were selling their goods at cheaper prices and thus lost some of their resources which could have fetched them higher returns. It was pointed out that about 65% of goods were imported

23. Foreign Affairs Record vol.xxxviii, no.4, April 1992, pp.149-158.
and 35% have been produced in the republic.  

About the political situation they said that President Nursultan Nazarbayev obtained 80.8% of the vote in the Presidential elections in 1991. Only one percent voted against the President. A small opposition group called Alash is in existence which comprises extreme nationalists who would like non-Kazakhs to leave the republic but the official approach is that the multi-ethnic friendship of all people living in Kazakhstan should be maintained.  

In 1917 only 2% of the population could read and write. Now literacy is 100% and higher education is wide-spread. They have about 58 institutes of higher learning, universities, 250 vocational schools and 1800 secondary. This has been a positive achievement of socialism in Kazakhstan.  

They are eager to work out a system of mixed economy with India in order to solve their economic problems. On 30


January 1992, the delegation had a very useful discussion with the Foreign Minister of Kazakhstan, Mr. T. Suleimanov. He was grateful for India's recognition of their independent sovereign republic and they are glad that India decided immediately to establish an embassy in Almaty. He underlined the need for exchange of ministerial teams and for establishment of stronger diplomatic contacts. He was keenly looking forward to the visit of their President to Delhi in the near future. He emphasized that India is a very important country for Kazakhstan, with long historic and cultural contact and possessing a great industrial potential for development.27

They are eagerly looking forward for closer contacts with India in the spheres of economy, diplomacy, education and culture. The Foreign Minister mentioned that India's long experience of working a market - economy can be of much value for them and Kazakhstan would like to learn from India especially her experience in running state sector and private sector. The Foreign Minister categorically stated that religion cannot be the sound basis of state hood a theory propounded by Pakistan. He was clear that state formation has to be on secular lines as it is in India. The

27. Foreign Affairs Record, ibid.; also S. Nihal Singh; "Central Asia: A Variety of Suitors" Hindustan Times, 28th Feb 1992, New Delhi.
delegation met the Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan Mr. Djoldasbekov. In his opening remarks he said the tradition of friendship with India is old. Glorious sons of India like Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru are greatly respected in Kazakhstan. Kazakhs are considered one of the most ancient peoples of Asia, but due to several developments they lost their identity and language for many years. Their republic is multi-national and they would like to work out a pattern of harmonious living of different peoples. Secular basis of the state is the only stable basis for healthy and positive political system in modern times. 28

The delegation also paid a visit to a mosque in Almaty where the Naib Mufti briefed them about the religious situation. He said that now old mosques are being repaired and new mosques are being constructed. There is now freedom of conscience and of religious belief in Kazakhstan. He was greatly appreciative of India's foreign policy approach, to global and regional problems. 29

The delegation on its return to Tashkent on 31 January'92 had the opportunity to visit the Sun -physics

28. Foreign Affairs Record vol. XXXIX, no. 5, May 1993, pp. 138-140.

29. ibid,; also M. Hasan Nuri, "India and Central Asia, Past, Present and Future", Regional Studies, 11 (1); Winter 1992-93.
Institute of Solar Energy in Tashkent. The institute of Solar Energy appeared a very developed institute where a large solar furnace is built on the mountain. The Institute was established for military purposes of energy utilisation. Prof. Gulamov, the Director of the institute mentioned that earlier they had arrangement for testing parts of tanks and other weaponry in the Institute. He particularly mentioned that earlier they had simulated conditions for missiles testing, the like of which there are only 2 in the world - one somewhere in France and other in Tashkent.

He said that they are now busy in conversion of plants for civilian users. The Uzbek and Indian scientist can work out a joint programme in developing solar energy and also developing certain other aspects of space science for developments purposes.

The solar furnace shown was an expensive instrument for which they had spent 70 million American dollars. It is meant to produce 200 tonnes of different materials of production. In this also he emphasised that joint ventures with India are possible. For example, they can produce 10,000 water pumps for India. When he was asked about the brain drain from Uzbekistan to advanced countries, specially USA, he said not many scientists are willing to leave because of strong family ties and also because they
have a strong sense of national pride to serve their people. He said Uzbeks would go abroad but come back and help our people because our duty is to build a new Uzbekistan.

Prof. Gulamov mentioned that Uzbekistan has very good scientific and technological relations with China, as well as with several Western countries like Germany, France, Canada and USA. A law for foreign collaboration has already been prepared. According to provisions of this law foreigners are entitled to own industrial property in Uzbekistan and export their produce. He indicated that Uzbekistan requires many medicines and drugs which India can supply, India being quite good in medical and hospital Administration and also it will be cheaper to buy from India. 30

About the Solar institute he said that before 1990 nearly 60% of its production was for military use and 40% civilian purposes, but now almost the entire production is civilian oriented. When he was asked as to how many institutes are part of Uzbek Academy of Sciences he said there are about 40 institutes of higher learning affiliated to the academy. Their major problem in scientific research

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30. *Foreign Affairs Record*, ibid.
is the problem of funds. That year's budget for the institute was 150 million roubles for a staff of about 15,000 scientists. He also mentioned that they are attempting to work out a high priority in science and technology for which the academy of science has established a coordination council.31

On 1 February 1992 the delegation visited the state Centre of TV in Tashkent, and met its Director Mr. Hait Baev. He mentioned that radio system in Uzbekistan was fully integrated with the former union system in the CIS. About 470 persons work in the state centre of TV and they have transmissions in foreign languages including Hindi and Urdu. He mentioned that they regularly receive letters from Indian listeners. Since 1991 with the formal independence of the Republic of Uzbekistan they are attempting of re-build their TV and radio system as an autonomous sector. A new Tele - radio company has been established which is autonomous and they are seeking contacts with neighbours. New programmes are being prepared especially in the Turkish language in order to reach out to Turkey32

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32. Foreign Affairs Record, ibid.

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On 2 February 1992, the delegation flew to Samarkand, for a day's visit to historic sites. It also had an opportunity to see the tomb of the famous Muhadith (author of the saying of the prophet) Iman Bukhani, which is located in the village of Khurtand, about 20 Km from Samarkand.

On 3 February 1992 the delegation had a long and interesting session with the Union of writers of Uzbekistan in Tashkent. This organization is 60 years old and has 700 members comprising writers, poets, dramatists, and few scientists as well. In Uzbekistan, writers union has been a powerful organisation and quite influential in social and political activities. Their President Mr. Jamal Kamal mentioned about the close and long association of Uzbek intellectuals with India. They mentioned that Babur was not a Mongol but Uzbek-Turk from the city of Andahan. They see in Babur historic link between Uzbekistan and India. They were quite emphatic in underlying their love and admiration of Indian music, dance, folk culture and the intellectual heritage.

They mentioned that many Indian books have been translated, including a most competent translation of Ramayana. Almost the entire collected works of Rabindranath Tagore have been available in Uzbekistan for decades. They are greatly fond of the personality and writing of
Jawaharlal Nehru. Most of his books have already been translated in the Uzbek language. The President said Jawaharlal Nehru has been a great authority for them in moulding their approach and policies about world affairs.  

Uzbek people have great interest in the life and teachings of great prophets of the world, and the sayings of religious leaders. Continuously in the last 70 years several books have been published by Uzbek writers not only on the life and teachings of prophet Mohammed but also on Moses, Jesus Christ, Gautam Buddha and on Hindu philosophy. Senior member and an eminent poet Mr. Shukullah said prophets had a common message for human beings, namely love goodness and peace. Therefore, there is great similarity in their basic teachings. He also mentioned the need for continuing literacy contacts because, as he put it, literacy contacts are contacts between people, civilization and culture. He added that love of India has come to us from Indian books and films.  

The writers also expressed their view that 135 years of what they called as 'Russian Imperialism' (i.e roughly from  

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34. Foreign Affairs Record, ibid. p.67.
1856 when the Tzarist forces moved into Central Asia) have dominated the people and society of Uzbekistan. They added that for the first time now they feel that they have come into their own. They are conscious of their responsibility to utilise their independence and sovereignty for the welfare of the people. They were emphatic in underlying equality of all people and nation and expressed their desire to have their own polity, economy and security according to their own heritage and perception. They also said that they do not want to have any disunity in the country, because at this moment, they have to build their country as a united people. They mentioned about certain elements in Uzbekistan which have different orientation including conservative Islamic fundamentalism but they added that by and large the Uzbek people are committed to rationalism and progressive outlook. That is why the Uzbek President Mr. Islam Karimov had emphasized the need for peace, solidarity and stability in Uzbekistan. The writers mentioned that they support his approach for building Uzbekistan in a new mould.\textsuperscript{35}

At this point it may be mentioned that one of the famous Uzbek poets Mr. Mohammed Salikh, member of Parliament, had stood against the President or their

\textsuperscript{35}ibid.
republic, Mr. Karimov, as an opposition candidate. But he only obtained 125 of votes. He belongs to a group which advances the cause of Pan-Turkic unity as opposed to Islamic fundamentalism. The name of the party to which he belongs is Birlik, which means unity.

Despite the establishment of socialism Central Asians felt that Russian domination continued even after the October Socialist Revolution in the name of unity of working class and solidarity of the people of the Soviet Union. They said that earlier Moscow was always in the picture in several aspects of their life. Even if they had to go Afghanistan they had to first fly to Moscow and then fly back to Kabul and again on return journey they could not come directly to Tashkent but had to fly to Moscow and return to Tashkent from there. 36

The writers were very enthusiastic about their friendship with other Central Asian republics, whom they refer to as brothers. While they support the right of the Slavic people who had been living in their republic for a long time, they still feel that the Europeans, specially the Russians, must learn to respect the Uzbek national culture,

language and traditions. They had a feeling that Russian domination of the Soviet Union was responsible for dividing the people of Central Asia among themselves and keeping them separate from the Turks with whom they have strong natural ethnic ties.

Regarding the situation of religion in Uzbekistan in Indian delegation had an interesting meeting with Deputy Grand Mufti of Uzbekistan Mr. Zahidjan Kadirov. He mentioned that the Muslim Board of Central Asia was established in 1943 to look after Muslim religious endowments and mosques. They have many departments including a department of international relations with foreign countries. They have contacts with about 80 countries and several Islamic organisation and they have been sending students abroad for study at Mecca and Medina.

In 1992 they had established an Islamic institute in Dushanbe. Then Madrasas were established in Krigizia and Turkmenia. The number of students (including girls) in the Madrasas have increased in Bukhara and in Tashkent. Mr. Kadirov also mentioned that while in 1989 there were about 85 mosques in use in Uzbekistan, today there are more than 500 mosques, most of them newly built and some of them old which have been renovated. Saudi Arabia has been giving them donations for the construction of mosques and for
publication of religious books. He mentioned that in the whole of Central Asia there are about 1,000 mosques and that in the Madrasas about 400 students are studying in Bukhara, 200 in Tashkent, 150 in Dushanbe and 100 in Samarkhand.37

Later in the day the delegation had a useful discussion with the members of the presidium of the Academy of Science of Uzbekistan. The Uzbek Academy has 14 scientific institutions in the field of physics for instance electronics, nuclear physics, thermal physics, solid state physics etc., affiliated to it. They already have close contacts with Indian scientists and scientific institutions, specially, in the areas of physics and fundamental mathematical research. They have contacts with the Indian Institute of Science, Calcutta and Bangalore and have a joint research project in the Institution of Solar Energy with Prof. P. Rama Rao of Indian Institute of Science, Calcutta. They have come to an agreement with Prof. Rao to establish in Delhi. They are interested in promoting joint research in the chemistry of plants in particular and chemistry in general because of its relevance for the production of cotton which is one of their main produce.

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37. Foreign Affairs Record, ibid.; also Dilip Hiro, "Islamist strengths and weaknesses In Central Asia, middle east Source?" International Affairs. vol.3; 5, Feb. 1993. pp.443-449.
They have 10 institutions in Biology under the Academy concerned with micro biology, physical biology, chemical biology, zoology and soil sciences. They attach great importance to experimental biology. They have a strong school of geology and some of the scientists have made great contributions in their work on gold. As is well known, Uzbekistan is very rich in its mineral resources and therefore they are interested in promoting research on mineral resources and therefore they are interested in promoting research on mineral sciences.

They have also two institutes of economics and humanities, and also of language and literature and archeology. They are however conscious of their deficiency in social sciences, including the entire area of economics, specially applied industrial economics. Therefore, they are interested in promoting collaboration with India in social sciences, economics, political science, sociology etc. They have contacts with India in the medical research field as well, especially in research on tuberculosis. They also have contacts in areas of genetics with Indian scientists.38

The members of the Presidium who met the Indian delegation were Prof. M. Sulakhitdinov, who is President of

38. Foreign Affairs Record, ibid.
the Academy and is a Russian, Prof. Khalmurado, Vice-President (who is a Biotechnologist and is in charge of international scientific relations of the Academy) and Prof. R. Gulamov of the solar science institute who is the Executive Secretary of the Academy of Science.

In the main committee room of the Academy of Science hangs huge and beautiful portrait of Abu-Rehan al-Beruni, the famous medieval scientist who wrote not only on astronomy and mathematics but also a most comprehensive book on India known as Kitab-ul-Hind.

The delegation's last meeting in Tashkent was with Mr. Khasimov, Chairman of the State Control Committee of Uzbekistan. He is reportedly close to the President Mr. Islam Karimov and has important role to play in policy matters.

While welcoming the delegation he emphasized; to build close relations with Indian, especially in science, technology and culture. He said that they are now framing new laws for promoting joint ventures with foreign countries. In this connection he added that Uzbekistan would like to promote India-Uzbekistan joint ventures in many
The State Control Committee helps the President of Uzbekistan in matters of diplomatic and political relations. One of their main tasks is to control and monitor the implementation of programmes as passed by the Supreme Soviet of Uzbekistan. They also control the financial spending and preparation of the state budget. It is the main committee dealing with relations with foreign countries. Mr. Mir Khasimov mentioned in his concluding remarks that as a result of the visit the Indian delegation relations between the two countries would become closer in all spheres of life. It was almost a fitting and most satisfactory conclusion of the goodwill visit. Leaving Tashkent in the night of 4 February the delegation returned to New Delhi on 5 February 1992.

A New Phase in Relation Between Central Asian States and India:

R.L. Bhatia, then Minister for state for External Affairs visited three of the Central Asian States in 1993, Uzbekistan, Kyrghyzstan and Kazakhstan. His visit enabled India to form a first hand impression of the dynamics of change currently underway in this extremely significant


40. Foreign Affairs Record, ibid.;
region. This process is of vital interest to India which has ancient links with Central Asia States, that have developed substantially in modern times.

In his interaction with the leadership and peoples of the Central Asian States he found that they share our secular outlook and are desirous or building a modern state where religion is kept separate from politics. The Indian Minister conveyed to his hosts that India wishes to see a strong and self-reliant Central Asia and expressed willingness to help in building the necessary infrastructure needed for this task, mainly by sharing India's own experience of development as an independent democratic and multi-ethnic nation state.

He was deeply impressed by the evident interest in Central Asia regarding India's experience as a functioning democracy. Since they achieved independence from USSR the Central Asian States have witnessed the formation of new political parties. These parties are eager to evolve their distinct platforms and will be inevitably interested in the political systems in their neighbourhood.

During Minister's visit to Central Asia, he signed agreements for setting up joint commissions, for
strengthening technical and economic cooperation, and also for greater people to people contact through Cultural Exchange Programmes as India had with former USSR in which Central Asia was a part. India is confident that the meetings of these joint commissions will give a significant impulse to the growth of bilateral relations in all fields. In turn, such a development of India's relations with Central Asian States will naturally be influenced by the new political system which is emerging in that region. Therefore, this regions is of special interest to the Government of India and its peoples.41

Government of India has already hosted the visit of the Presidents of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrghyzstan and Turkmenistan and the Prime Minister of Tajikistan to India. The visits have laid the foundation for long term development of bilateral relations with these countries.

In international affairs, the Central Asian states have expressed general appreciation of India's constructive and consistent foreign policy to support underdeveloped countries, especially in Asia and Africa. India today

constitutes a major factor for regional stability, and good relations between India and Central Asian states are an imperative for peace and development in the south Asian region.

The thrust of India's cooperation with all the Central Asian states is to revive the people's participation and exchanges which had earlier been the hallmark of its interaction with this region through USSR. In this task, greater financial outlay for hosting Central Asian visitors to India, as well as the rapid development of air links with each Central Asian state in order to facilitate trade, cultural visits and tourism exchanges, will play a pivotal role. The impulse for achieving the goal of greater people to people exchanges has to come from a clear assessment of the significance and importance of India's relations with Central Asian states.

Cooperation with Kazakhstan:

Kazakhstan president, Mr. Nazarbayev, who transited through Delhi, met the then Prime Minister Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, in the course of his halt in New Delhi on 20 July 1993. The two leaders discussed various areas of India-Kazakhstan relation, especially in the areas of
socio-economic, scientific, technical, cultural and educational and cooperation. They also discussed the possibilities of direct air link between the two countries. Both felt that other initiatives such as exchanges of scientists, academicians and students should also be looked at. The leaders also discussed the situation in their respective regions. They reiterated their commitment to the ideals of secularism. The Kazakh President agreed with the prime Minister of India on the need to combat the dangers of fundamentalism and extremism in this region.42

Both leaders expressed satisfaction at the state of India-Kazakhstan bilateral relations, and the action being taken on the ground to promote cooperation in specific areas. They noted that the India-Kazakhstan Joint Commission meeting commenced on the morning of 21st July 1993, where the details of cooperation in different areas were taken up. Mr. G.A. Abilsytov, the Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister, reviewed the progress made in on going Joint Commission talks and informed the prime Minister that the discussions were going very well. He stated that Kazakhstan would like to cooperate with India in areas such as space and the

peaceful uses of nuclear energy also. In particular, he invited India's participation in the Baikanour cosmodrome.\textsuperscript{43}

Kazakhstan's Deputy Prime Minister also thanked Indian Prime Minister for the two credit loans of US $10 million each extended by India. With regard to Indian Prime Minister's earlier offer to assist with technical training in India, the Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister mentioned that this was being pursued vigorously outside the Joint Commission including the possible setting up of an Indo-Kazakh technical college in Kazakhstan. The Indian Prime Minister welcomed the progress that was being made in the Joint Commission in concrete terms and emphasised that there was excellent scope for cooperation between the two countries. He said he was happy that the joint Commission was off to a good start and hoped that the results would form a springboard for further cooperation in different areas.

The plenary session of the Indo-Kazakh Joint Commission meeting commenced on 20th July, 1993. The Co-Chairmen were Shri Balram Jakhar, Minister of Agriculture, on the Indian side, and Mr. G.A. Abilsyitov, Deputy Prime Minister and

\textsuperscript{43} Report on the Plenary Session of the Indo-Kazakh Joint Commission Meeting, on 22 July 1993, cited in ibid. 303
the Minister for Science and New Technologies, on the Kazakh side.44

The Joint Commission met on the specific directive following the meeting between Indian Prime Minister and Kazakh President Nazarbayev in May 1993. The decision was taken in view of the mutually shared desire to accelerate the pace of economic cooperation between the two countries. Both the leaders shared the view that India can play a role in the process of modernisation of Kazakh economy, training of Kazakh cadres and collaborating in a large number of diversified areas - for example, hydrocarbons, mineral resources, agriculture, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals etc. The Joint Commission will also address the question of overcoming procedural bottlenecks. The Government of India has extended two credit loans of 10 million dollars each of which will help to generate project investment and promote trading. The Joint Commission will function through sub-committees which will develop more intensive collaboration in various sectors of economy and shall meet in the intervening period between the two sessions of the Joint Commission.

Four sub-committees were formed which commenced their meetings 22nd July 1993. These were sub-committees on trade and commerce, including industrial collaboration, agriculture, science and technology, and hydrocarbons, parallel with the meeting of the Joint Commission and sub-committees, members of the Kazakh delegation also had interaction with leading Indian businessmen. The Joint Commission meeting concluded in the afternoon of 23rd July 1993 with having opened links in so many new avenues.

At the end of the session, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed which covered specific areas of cooperation in several sectors including agriculture, hydrocarbons, railways, science and technology, construction, tourism, aviation, technical cooperation, health, ecology and environment, trade and commerce and joint ventures. The discussions covered the utilization of two lines of credit of 10 million dollars each which have been extended to Kazakhstan.45

During the course of his stay, Mr. Abilsyitov called on Prime Minister, External Affairs Minister of State Shri Salman Khursheed, Minister of State for Commerce, Shri Kamaluddin Ahmed and other dignitaries. In the concluding

session of the Joint Commission, the Agriculture Minister as well as the Kazakh Deputy Prime Minister expressed great satisfaction with the outcome of the discussions and expressed the hope that the just concluded Memorandum of Understanding will serve as a blue-print for cooperation for economic and technological cooperation between the two countries and thereby strengthen the already close relations.

**Cooperation With Uzbekistan:**

The Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan, Mr. T.H. Miryakubov called on the President, Dr. Shanker Dayal Sharma at Rashtrapati Bhavan, along with other members of his delegation on 29th July' 93. Mr. Miryakubov's visit to India was in connection with the Indo-Uzbekistan Joint Commission meeting. They had wide ranging discussions with the President on matters of bilateral and regional interest. The Uzbek delegation told the president that Uzbekistan considers India as one of its important economic partners. Both the leaders expressed the view that there is a great scope for intensifying economic cooperation between India and Uzbekistan. 46

Mr. Miryakubov presented to the President of India a traditional Uzbek dress as mark of love and affection of the people of Uzbekistan for the people of India that continues through centuries.

A new agreement for avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income and on capital between India and Uzbekistan was signed. The agreement provides for reduced rate of taxation in specified areas which will encourage mutual flow of investment and technology between the two countries. The agreement contains provisions for solving the problems of the tax prayers in the other country through mutual agreement procedure. It also provides for exchange of information between the tax authorities of the two countries for the prevention of fraud or evasion of taxes covered by the treaty. It is expected that the agreement will go a long way in increasing economic cooperation between the two countries. The agreement was signed by Mr. Dinesh Singh, External Affairs Minister on behalf of the Government of India and by Mr. T.M. Miryakubov, Deputy Prime Minister on behalf of the Government of Uzbekistan. This agreement came into effect in India from April 1, 1993, and in Uzbekistan from Jan 1, 1993, on completion of procedural formalities.

India and Uzbekistan signed an agreement on Tourism which, among other things, provide for exploring the
possibilities of joint collaboration for investment in tourism sector. To achieve this purpose, it was agreed to exchange expertise and publicize investment incentives available and the touristic characteristics of each of the two countries.47

The Agreement was signed by Shri Ghulam Nabi Azad, Union Minister of Tourism and Civil Aviation on behalf of India and by Mr. T.M. Miryakubov, Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan on behalf of his country. The agreement, valid initially for five years and automatically renewable for a successive five years period is expected to help furthering the ties between the two countries. It will also help in augmentation of tourist traffic from India to Uzbekistan and vice versa.

It was agreed that both the countries shall explore the possibilities of cooperation in building, establishment and management of hotels and other tourist establishments for which the possibilities of joint ventures shall be explored.

A Joint Committee comprising of the representatives of tourism industry from both the sides and the government officials will review the progress of tourism development between the two countries from time to time.

47. Times of India, 2 July 1994, New Delhi.
Kazakhstan has significance for India's being the sole nuclear power in Central Asia, one that shares a border with, and is fast developing commercial links with, India's rival China. During President Nursultan Nazarbayev's visit to New Delhi in February 1992, five agreements were signed. Kazakhstan sought India's cooperation in developing its textile and hotel construction industries. When Rao visited Almaty in May 1993, Kazakhstan invited India to participate in its space programme at the Baikonur cosmodrome. India offered Kazakhstan credits of $10 million in 1992 and 1993. Following a visit to Kazakhstan in June 1994 by Salman Khurshid, the India Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, it was agreed that trade between the two countries should be increased. To help Indian businesses to overcome problems of transportation, New Delhi is considering subsidizing weekly flights to Tashkent and Almaty. Under an agreement signed in April 1992, India and Turkmenistan will cooperate in several fields including natural gas extraction, chemicals, processing of agriculture.


product, hotel construction and banking. In June 1994, India offered Tajikistan a 10 years loan worth $5 million.

Economic ties between India and the five Central Asia states have got off to a slow start, and will develop gradually. India's main aim is to prevent Central Asia from becoming a spring board for the activities of hostile countries, and it must contend with Pakistan's efforts to enhance its influence in the region. Given India's own large Muslim population, and the continuing secessionist movement in Kashmir, any increase in the activities of countries whose foreign policies have an 'Islamic' leitmotif would be of concern to India. But New Delhi has realized that religious fundamentalism is a distant prospect in Central Asia. Also, as several Middle Eastern countries are jostling for influence in the region, Pakistan will find itself being undercut rather than helped by them. New Delhi reckons that economic cooperation will give India its easiest entree into Central Asia.

The possible agenda of cooperation with Uzbekistan was spelt out by the Foreign Ministers of Uzbekistan Ubaidullah Abdurazzakov, when he said, "We need considerable help of India in many spheres- economic, political scientific, 

technological, cultural, etc., especially in areas of managerial services, investments and banking sectors, market economy problems, service sector and telecommunications."52

Equally keen are the educationists in working out agreements for promoting cooperation in higher education. Rector and Professors of Tashkent University and members of the presidium of the Academy of Sciences—where a beautiful painting of Al-Biruni now adorns the Committee room and the Minister of High and Secondary Education of Uzbekistan, Dr. Shaukat Alimov, mentioned that in some fields of knowledge they have practically no expertise, and it is in these areas that they would seek effective cooperation with India. Already they have established close contacts with Indian scientists in applied and fundamental research, especially in physics, electronics, solar energy research, etc. Now they would like to extend cooperation in management studies, industrial studies, computer sciences, international law and organisation, social sciences like economics and political science. They are on the verge of recasting their educational system, and would like India to advise them especially from its own experience of running institutes of technology and institutes of management, as well as the entire gamut of social science studies.53


The Al-Farabi University in Almaty, named after the famous medieval scientist, philosopher and encyclopaedist, and established in 1936, proposed to introduce degrees on the pattern of BA and MA in India and is planning to revise the content and perspectives of their textbooks, especially in social sciences and history. They consider India's experience of much relevance to them as it has had as they put it the advantage of having synthesised western knowledge to the specific requirement of transforming an oriental civilisation to modernity. The Al-Farabi University would like to explore prospects of joint research collaboration with Indian higher educational institutions like IIT, IIS, JNU etc. They have joint research project in cosmic radiation with the US, and in other fields of sciences, with Germany, France, Scandinavian countries and China.

The Kazakh Friendship Society, housed in one of the most modern buildings in Almaty with elaborate facilities for conferences, meetings and cultural performances, etc. runs an India Club, called Shanti. The members of this club, under its charming and energetic secretary, Madam Zaitoon Masuma, have trained amateur artists in Indian dances, music and arts. They would like some dance gurus to visit them, and teach dance techniques to the eager
youngsters. They plan to establish a cinema hall for the exhibition of Indian films and video cassettes, which are tremendously popular and also to set up a library on Indian literature, culture and civilisation. The President of the Friendship Society, Madam Zeenat Ameerkhanov, underlined the fact that "our people have deep feelings and respect for Indian culture and have great fondness for Indian films and music". Almost identical sentiments were expressed in the Uzbekistan Union of Writers in Tashkent, which has been in existence for over 60 years, and with its over 700 members played seminal role in the intellectual life of the people. Their president, Jamal Kamal, spoke of the inspirational role of India's classical and modern literature, and its impact of Uzbek literary traditions.54

A measure of their fondness for India can be seen in the fact that an authentic translation of Ramayan in the Uzbek language was done a long time ago, and the complete collected works of Rabindranath Tagore are already translated. Most of the writings of Jawaharlal Nehru - much admired and loved as a leader and politician of resurgent Asia - are already available and some more are being currently translated. Their eminent old poet, Shukrallah, told us that the poetry of Mirza Bedil, Ghalib and Iqbal is

widely known in Uzbekistan. Reverting to the theme of commonality of humanism, ethics, goodness and peace in all religions, he said that for more than 60 years several books on the world's major religions and prophets have been published by Uzbek authors.

The writers have been very critical of the distortions made in their national identity by what they refer to, with obvious bitterness, as Russian colonialism and imperialism that entered Central Asia about 135 years ago, and despite radical changes and revolutionary slogans after the October Revolution in, 1917, continued to maintain a posture of domination as evidenced by a deliberate attempt at 'Russification' of their culture, language, script, and nomenclature in the name of socialist solidarity and integration of the Soviet Union. They emphasised that they would now like to rebuild their society, polity and economy in conditions of sovereign independence, according to their own heritage and genius. Two major concerns seem to dominate their endeavours at this point their history. One to stabilize the foundation of a productive, efficient and demand-fulfilling economy, and two, to build a secular, democratic state-structure in their multi-ethnic society.

Ethnic conflicts have featured prominently in the politics of South Asian Countries, as in most countries in
the contemporary world. But forms and modalities of politics of ethnicity are different from case to case. Nevertheless, after the disintegration of the Soviet Union ethnic conflicts have begun to change the geo-politics on a pace which has no parallel in recent history. The disintegration of the Soviet Union, rising ethnic assertion in Asian part of the erstwhile Soviet Union have begun to dramatically change geo-politics. The recent developments in the Asiatic republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union will be of far reaching significance for India. If ethnicity as an independent and autonomous discipline needs to be studied theoretically, practical politics demands that its influence on the course of developments in the regional politics should attract immediate attention of India's policy-makers.

The unleashing of powerful external ideological forces such as ethnic-nationalism and democracy on this region, which is already convulsing from religious fundamentalism, ethnic and cultural differences and separatism could be destabilizing and dangerous. Boundaries between internal and external conflicts are fast disappearing. Old boundary questions might be opened up, with new pressures to redraw colonial borders now that Cold War restraints on such demands have disappeared. Any change in existing national borders is certain to lead to bloodshed and upheaval.
The implications for the wider Asia Pacific region, especially for large, multi-religious, ethnically diverse states like India, China, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Indonesia are ominous. There is already concern that separatist aspirations in Kashmir and Punjab in India, will be strengthened.

This shows that the disintegration of the Soviet Union and rise of ethnic conflicts in some of its erstwhile republics have begun to influence the course of political developments in India. Though it will be incorrect to overestimate the impact of the recent developments in the CIS on Indian polity, it will be equally wrong to ignore the moral pressure being unleashed by the recent developments in the erstwhile Soviet Union.

If the various developments in Central Asian Republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union are pieced together, it becomes clear that geo-political situation in this entire region is undergoing significant changes. There are clear indications that Central Asian Republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union may from a new regional economic and military alliance, unless the trend is reversed at various levels. It is difficult to hazard a guess about Russia's policy in this region, particularly towards the sub-continent. There seems to be two trends among the ruling elite of Russia at
present. One section of the ruling elite in Russia wants to strengthen relations with Pakistan in order to protect its interest in Central Asia. Some of the Russian scholars on Asia have begun to advocate that because of Pakistan's geographic proximity and Islamic ties with these republics, Islamabad should come on the top priority of Russia's policy in the region. There are other experts who are strongly opposed to this viewpoint and want that the traditional friendship between India and the erstwhile Soviet Union should be further strengthened and consolidated. Nevertheless the situation is still fluid. However, if there is a shift in the Russian policy in this region, Indo-Pak relations may have to be re-assessed with new parameters.55

There is yet another aspect of the recent developments in the Asiatic republics of the erstwhile Soviet Union. With untapped national resources and vast market for consumer goods in these republics, there is every likelihood that a new race may begin sooner or later, perhaps sooner than later, to enter into the economies of these republics. That being the position both from the standpoint of India's security and regeneration of its economy, policy makers in New Delhi have to evolve a concrete policy for these

republics with new parameters. Has the South Block begun to look at this problem with an open and fresh mind. There are no clear indications to this effect so far? 56

The Indian response to the restructuring of the former USSR has been rather slow and subdued. While it waited and watched, other countries were busy building bridges, forging friendships and cooperation with Central Asian states. The second Russian revolution that transformed the political features of the Eurasian map is an event of global importance. The final shape of the independent republics may take time to emerge but it is an ongoing process and calls for quick and flexible responses.

Once free, each Central Asian state is keen to establish independent equations with the countries of the world. They hold India in high esteem and, even before independence, the representatives of Central Asian States attended the Asian Relations Conference in 1946 held at Delhi. Politically. They are more inclined to follow non-aligned, secular, democratic ideals pursued by India. Economically, they are keen to come out from the cast-iron mould of complete state control nor are they beholden to the much-trumpeted free market economy.

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56. FBIS. SOV-93-100, 26 May 1993.
The path of a mixed economy with slight local modification, most of them feel, will be the right course to follow. And here again, India offers an Ideal example. Consequently, a number of presidents, along with high-power delegations have visited India from republics like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan. Each has signed a treaty of friendship and agreements on trade and commerce, science and technology, art and a culture and economic cooperation. Each has denounced extremism and religious fundamentalism.

The Kazakh President, Nursultan Nazarbayev, unequivocally declared "there will be no ground for Islamic fundamentalism in Kazakhstan for it will take us several centuries back in time". Similar sentiments have been expressed by other Central Asian Presidents too.57

From Indian side, several non officials have made trips to these countries. Signing of various agreements is a good beginning but cannot take India far, Vigorous practical action had to been taken on the ground. For example, a specific number of students from these republics also be invited for higher education in India, cultural troupes could be exchanged on a regular basis, the number of air

57. SWB/SU/1701 AI/3-4, 29 May 1993.
flights has to be increased to facilitate tourist travelling, and trade fairs organised on reciprocal basis.

The Uzbeks feel emotionally attached to India. The leader of an Uzbek cultural delegation recently said that the Aryans went to India from Central Asia. The witty saint Khoja Nasruddin, the subject of a recent TV serial on Doordarshan, had his movement in the ancient city of Bukhara. Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, also, breathed his last in the city of Tashkent, which has erected a memorial for him.\(^{58}\)

Below the upper crust of Islam lie many artifacts belonging to the Buddhist and Palaeolithic periods. In an introduction to the book by Shiela Gujral on Asian Republics, P.V. Narasimha Rao, then Minister for Human Resources Development, says "till 4th century A.D. Buddhist civilisation was predominant in the whole region. The relics of Buddhism are found in abundance."\(^{59}\)

In the ruins discovered near Amu Darya, a number of Buddhist statues were located in rural areas traced to palaeolithic periods. The remains of Sohan culture which


\(^{59}\) ibid.
originated in Sutlej-Beas basins have been discovered by the archaeologists in Uzbekistan region.

Uzbekistan exports its products to more than 90 countries including France, Finland, Italy and Japan. It would be particularly interested in importing farm and food products and equipment along with consultancy and management expertise. Other countries are not sitting idle. The Central Asian Republics have already been sucked into the Economic Cooperation Organisation. Since Pakistan has no common border with the Central Asian States, it is bending double to woo Afghanistan which borders Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. India also does not have a common border and roads have to pass through other lands. Therefore, the imperative need to strengthen other forms of transport and travel. These republics, in spite of following Islam as religion, are closer to Islamic catholicity than fundamentalism and fanaticism. For them, at present, India appears to be a better bet. It is now for India to reciprocate. The sooner, the better.

Shri P.V. Narasimha Rao, then Prime Minister of India, visited the newly independent Central Asian State of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan from 23 to 26 May 1993, as a goodwill return visit to these Central Asian countries whose
respective Presidents had visited India in August 1991 (Uzbekistan) and February 1992 (Kazakhstan).

Visit to Uzbekistan:

The rapid and robust growth of India's relations with Uzbekistan since 1991 provided an excellent backdrop of a positive atmosphere for the visit of Indian Prime Minister in 1993. The Uzbek President went beyond protocol to accompany the Indian prime Minister on all his official engagements in Tashkent. India is held in very high esteem and affection by Uzbeks from all walks of life. A visit to the Lal Bahadur Shastri memorial in Tashkent brought back poignant memories of the historic Tashkent Conference of January 1996. That marked the beginning of the peace process of settling disputes through bilateral negotiations between India and Pakistan, a process which culminated with the signing of the historic 1972 Shimla Agreement. The Shastri school and its delightful Hindi speaking pupils are a living proof of Uzbek-India friendship.

During official discussions and in interaction with non-officials in Uzbekistan, it was evident that the Uzbeks nurture warm sentiments about their historic links with India, which date back to thousands of years. This relationship has incrementally been strengthened with the passage of time, making bilateral relations today a rich
amalgam of shared ideas, cultural mores and linguistic allusion.

People from all walks of life were especially conscious of the fact that throughout Soviet rule, India continued its close interaction with Uzbekistan, whether through Prime Ministerial visits beginning with that of Jawaharlal Nehru in 1955 or through active participation in the Tashkent International Film Festival. Independent Uzbekistan has paid homage to the artistic contribution of Raj Kapoor by instituting a special prize from 1992 onwards in his name for the best feature film. Uzbeks were delighted that the first such prize was won by Raj Kapoor's last film Henna. Raj Kapoor continues to live in the hearts of Uzbeks. 60

During Indian Prime Minister's visit, the following documents were signed:

i. Treaty on the Principles of Inter-State Relations and Cooperation;

ii. Agreement on Trade and Economic Cooperation;

iii. Agreement on the Credit of $10 million

iv. Agreement on Air services.

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v. MOU on Measures for Increasing and Enhancing Economic Cooperation and Trade.

This document was negotiated in Tashkent itself on the specific direction of Indian Prime Minister and the Uzbek President Karimov. Prime Minister of India also sanctioned opening of an Indian Cultural Centre in Tashkent, the establishment of an Indian Chair at the University of World Economics and Diplomacy in Tashkent, and the donation of medicines and medical equipment worth Rs. 40 lakhs, as well as equipment for receiving Doordarshan programmes for Uzbek television. A fresh credit of US $ 10 million, in addition to a similar amount which had been extended in 1992 was also announced during the Prime Minister's visit, for joint ventures, project exports and purchase of capital goods from India. India also agreed to increase the number of seats offered to Uzbek nationals for training in banking, foreign trade and diplomacy under the Indo-Uzbek Agreement on Technical and Economic cooperation it was agreed that the Indo-Uzbek Joint Commission would meet in July 1993 to follow up these important initiatives.61

It was appropriately symbolic of the close relations between India and Uzbekistan that India is the first country

to have commenced construction of its Embassy building in the heart Tashkent on a plot specially chosen by the Uzbek Government, on the same Boulevard on which the president's office is situated. During his visit Prime Minister Narasimha Rao laid the foundation stone of this project, as a gentle shower blessed the audience. Prime Minister was greeted warmly and local school children put up entertainment items including Indian songs and dances.

In terms of a shared world view and outlook, India and Uzbekistan utilised the Prime Minister's visit to reiterate once again their commonality of perceptions. Both sides expressed commitment to secularism and opposition to religious fundamentalism and extremism. The Uzbek side applauded India's positive and peaceful role in the region. In a reference to attempts made by vested interests to create misunderstandings between India and Uzbekistan on the question of Kashmir, the Uzbek President categorically stated that "Uzbekistan stands for the unity and the territorial integrity of India. This problem should be resolved through peaceful means and negotiations". In an ancient land fresh foundation of friendship were laid in the historical city of Khiva.62

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Visit to Kazakhstan:

From Uzbekistan the Indian Prime Minister travelled to the adjoining and the largest of Central Asian state, Kazakhstan. India's ties with Kazakhstan can be traced back to historic times of silk trade, although they have assumed concrete shape only in recent years. In 1955 Prime Minister of India Jawaharlal Nehru along with young Smt. Indira Gandhi, visited Almaty. During the Festival of India in USSR in 1986-87, several Indian cultural groups visited Kazakhstan. From the moment of Indian delegation's arrival, Kazakh hosts demonstrated that the warmth of their feeling for India. Prime Minister was welcomed with great warmth and cordiality by Kazakh President Nazarbayev.

India's relations with Kazakhstan have grown rapidly, and have received a positive impulse with the highly successful visit of President Nazarbayev to India in February 1992. In Almaty both sides were able to further the important initiatives taken during president Nazarbayev's visit to India. The following agreements were signed during Narasimha Rao's visit:

i. Agreement on Cooperation between the Foreign Ministers of the two countries

ii. Agreement on Science and Technology
The Indian Prime Minister announced the opening of an Indian Cultural Centre in Almaty and that India would donate medical supplies worth Rs. 40 lakhs. A fresh credit worth US$10 million was extended to Kazakhstan in order to strengthen bilateral economic and commercial relations. India also agreed to the Kazakh request for extending training facilities in technical subjects, specially in areas of science and technology. It was agreed that the Indo-Kazakh Joint Commission would meet in July 1993.

A great deal of attention was paid during official discussions, as also during interaction with Kazakh intellectuals, to the initiative taken by the Kazakh president on convening a Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia. India has already participated in the exploratory expert level meeting on this subject held in Almaty in March 1993. It was significant to note that the Kazakh president publicly expressed interest in India's constructive role in the strengthening of global stability in Asia and in the world.

As secular countries, India and Kazakhstan reiterated their determination to uphold the territorial integrity of sovereign states, and to join hands in fighting forces that use religion as a tool against countries with plural society, working collectively for the common good. With
highly developed infrastructure in space research, Kazakhstan is well situated for cooperation with other states in the region. India is ideally placed for joint cooperation in this field for mutual benefit. Many Kazakhs recalled with satisfaction the fact that the first Indian cosmonaut, Rakesh Sharma, was launched from the Kazakh Cosmodrome at Baikonour. It was agreed that both sides would discuss more joint projects in space exploration with Kazakhstan.

One of the highlights of Prime Minister's visit to Kazakhstan was his meeting with a leading group of Kazakh intellectuals. These included the prominent Nehru Friendship Prize winner Anuar Almzhanov, who is currently Chairman of the Socialist Party of Kazakhstan, and has written extensively on India, Bizak Kozhabekuly, an oriental historian who has written on historical roots of Indo-Kazakh relations and translated the Baburnama into Kazakh, the prominent Kazakh poet Amanzhalov Shamkenov, who has written a number of poems on Indo-Kazakh relations and has also been awarded the Nehru Friendship Prize, among others. Kazakh intellectuals are keenly aware of their significant historical role in creating appropriate conditions for the development of the identity of independent Kazakhstan. They were also very keen to develop cooperation between Kazakhstan and India in the fields of art, literature and
culture, projecting our common heritage as countries of Asia.63

As a state closely linked in demographic and economic terms with the European part of the CIS, Kazakhstan clearly has a major role as a bridge between the European and Asian parts of the CIS. It was this perception which emerged from Indian delegation's interaction with Kazakhs from different walks of life. Under the guidance of their current leadership, most Kazakhs are confident that they will make the transition to a new, prosperous future in a short span of time. An obvious advantage they enjoy is their comparatively small population (only 7 million people live in this vast country which is two-thirds the size of India), and the fact that huge reserves of oil and natural gas are on the threshold of being exploited.

The warm welcome accorded to the Prime Minister and his delegation and the extensive media coverage given to the visit testified to the commitment Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan have in developing their relations with India as well as their deep interest greater economic and commercial cooperation with India and their deep interest of greater economic and commercial cooperation with it and their opposition to any attempt to undermine the territorial 

integrity and sovereignty of independent countries in the region.

Some pertinent points have been raised about the growing religiosity and the revival of Islam in Central Asia. George I. Mirsky points out that Islam now embodies the idea of nationalism and sovereignty and it is a banner of liberation. Religiosity is growing rapidly among the peoples of Central Asia, where a few years ago there were only 260 mosques, the present number is more than 5,000. Warikoo has made a detailed study of the religiosity and the elements of fundamentalism in Central Asia. He believes that the Muslims in Central Asia have for the last 70 years adjusted to the Soviet policy without diluting or changing their religious allegiance. Had this been true then democratic parties would have been defeated by the Islamic Renaissance party and other such political organizations like Birlik, Erk, Adilet, Atmaken, Rastakez-e-Milli, Hizbe-i-Ahaya-i-Islam etc. This was not the case, since in the 1991 elections in all the five states, such organizations did not win. In Uzbekistan, in fact, President Karimov received 86% of the vote.

Hyman has made a detailed study of the trends of growing religiosity and Islamisation process. He finds a

64. K. Warikoo, "Central Asia in Ferment" in K. Warikoo and D. Norbu (eds), Ethnicity and Politics in Central Asia, New Delhi, 1992.

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trend where names of Russian structures have been changed to Arabic or Muslim form and public places have been re-named. For example, Pushkin park in Ferghana was renamed after Babur and the Lenin statue was replaced by a statue of Babur. He along with a host of Western authors share the opinion that Pan-Turkistan could be the ultimate reality. According to him, the Regional Council formed in June, 1990 and initiated by Karimov and Nazarbayev the presidents of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan respectively, is the first step towards a unified Central Asia. He cites one poem composed by one Uzbek poet which speaks for Pan-Turkic unity. 65 James Rupert (of Washington Post) in a detailed account of ethnic problem goes to the extent of saying that the present fundamentalist movement led by Islamic Renaissance Party goes back to the fierce tradition of Basmachi guerrilla movement. Tajikistan was a centre of the anti-Soviet Basmachi movement during 1920s and 1930s. There is a similar movement in the Ferghana Valley today.66


Not withstanding these apprehensions, the leadership in Central Asia is trying hard to establish bilateral relations with all the nations to find ways and means of economic cooperation. They did not even hesitate to establish bilateral relations with Israel for macro level projects, notably for drip irrigation. They have adopted the same approach in relation to China and the United States. If these efforts fail then the loose chains of fundamentalist forces may grow stronger. This will be disastrous not only for Central Asia but for neighbouring countries and South and South East Asia as well.