

**Press Information Bureau
Government Of India**

Prime Minister's Office
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Text of Media Statement by PM in Astana, Kazakhstan

His Excellency President Nursultan Nazarbayev,

Members of the media,

I am delighted to visit this beautiful country. It has been a short but a memorable and rewarding visit.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to President Nazarbayev and the people of Kazakhstan for the exceptional welcome and hospitality.

Excellency, I congratulate you once again on your 75th birthday. I wish you great health and a long life of service for your country and humanity.

Mr. President, your leadership is deeply admired. You have put Kazakhstan on the path of rapid progress. You have also played a stellar role in regional and global affairs.

I congratulate the people of Kazakhstan on the occasion of 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate and 20th anniversary of the Constitution of Kazakhstan.

I also learnt that this beautiful new capital is still celebrating Astana Day.

So, this is really a good time to visit Kazakhstan.

Last evening I spoke about my vision for India's relations with Central Asia. Kazakhstan will play a critical role in advancing this vision.

We greatly value our relationship with Kazakhstan. We have enormous synergies of markets, resources and skills for a strong bilateral relationship. We discovered remarkable convergence in our economic policies, approaches and strategies in a number of areas.

We have shared perspectives on many international issues, including regional peace, connectivity and integration; reforms in the United Nations; and, combating terrorism.

Kazakhstan is our biggest economic partner in the region. But, our relations are modest, compared to our potential. We will work together to take economic ties to a new level.

Kazakhstan was one of the first countries with which we launched civil nuclear cooperation through a uranium purchase contract. We are pleased to have a much larger second contract now.

We intend to expand cooperation in other minerals, as well.

Hydrocarbons is another area of high priority for us. Last evening, we launched the drilling operations for exploration in the first oil field with Indian investments in Kazakhstan.

I am pleased that President Nazarbayev responded positively to my request to consider additional mature blocks for Indian investments.

We will also give priority to investment in both directions in manufacturing and infrastructure. I was very encouraged by the interaction at the business roundtable yesterday that I chaired with Prime Minister Massimov.

We expect a new roadmap for cooperation from the joint business council of our chambers of commerce and industry.

Kazakhstan's Green Bridge Vision is similar to India's ambitious plan of adding 175 GW of renewable energy in the next seven years. This is another priority area of cooperation, including in the manufacture of equipment. In addition, India will participate on a large scale in the Expo 2017 in Astana.

We will also enhance cooperation in Space and Information Technology, including their application for governance and development.

We both agree that connectivity is an important issue, but one that we will address.

The International North South Transport Corridor, the Iran-Turkmenistan-Kazakhstan rail link, India's interest in joining the Ashkabat Agreement on trade and transit and India's investment in Chahbahar Port in Iran will strengthen connectivity.

The joint study group on India's proposal for a Free Trade Agreement with Eurasian Economic Union is a step towards our closer economic integration.

Development of human resources is a priority for both countries. Yesterday, I inaugurated the India-Kazakhstan Centre of Excellence in Information & Communication Technologies at the Eurasian National University. We are pleased to have contributed a super computer from India.

Consistent with our focus on youth, we have launched a new youth exchange programme with six Kazakh universities for the next five years.

Our defence and security cooperation is an important dimension of our strategic partnership. We both want to make it stronger, including in defence manufacturing. We welcome the new Memorandum of Understanding on defence cooperation.

President and I agreed on the pressing need for reforms of the United Nations and its Security Council. I thank him for Kazakhstan's continued support for India's candidature for a permanent seat in a reformed United Nations Security Council and for a UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

I reiterated India's support for Kazakhstan's candidature for a non-permanent seat in the UNSC for 2017-18.

I am also grateful to him and the people of Kazakhstan for the support in making the International Day of Yoga on June 21st a huge global success.

Mr. President, thank you for a very productive and pleasant visit. I feel that this visit has opened the door to a much broader and deeper relationship, including many new areas of productive cooperation.

I have extended an invitation to President Nazarbayev and look forward to receiving him in India.

Thank you.

MV
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