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5th Session of India - Kazakhstan Joint Working Group on Trade & Economic Cooperation

The 5th Session of India - Kazakhstan Joint Working Group on Trade & Economic Cooperation was held in New Delhi on 22-23 December. The Sides were led by Shri Sunil Kumar, Joint Secretary, Department of Commerce & Mr. Kairat Torebayev, General Director of International Cooperation Department of the Ministry of National Economy of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Both Sides discussed the current state and prospects of development of Indian - Kazakh economic and trade cooperation and exchanged views on the possibilities of expanding bilateral cooperation.

Free Trade Agreement between Eurasian Economic Union & India

Both Sides expressed satisfaction at the successful completion of the Joint Study Group Report on the feasibility of Free Trade Agreement between Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and India. They hoped that the process of obtaining internal clearances by both sides would be completed by end of December 2016 thereby paving the way for commencement of formal trade negotiations in early 2017. Both Sides agreed that early commencement and conclusion of formal negotiations on FTA would serve to boost bilateral trade.

International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC)

Both Sides agreed that an efficient and effective border crossing procedure and multi-modal transportation arrangement could provide further impetus to bilateral trade. In this context, the Kazakh side informed that since December of 2014, when the "Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran" railway, which is the eastern branch of the International North-South Transport Corridor, was launched, 2.5 thousand tons of cargo has already been transported on this route. Indian shippers and freight forwarders were requested to make extensive use of this transportation facility for bilateral trade. Both Sides agreed that

since all members of INSTC, except India and Oman, were already signatories to TIR Convention 1975, Custom issues & Common Documentation issues could be quickly resolved if India signed the TIR Convention and aligned its system.

Bilateral Investments

The Kazakh side expressed interest in establishing cooperation with leading Indian companies dealing with production and sale of phosphorus pentasulfide and its derivatives. The Sides expressed interest in further development of bilateral cooperation in the exploration and development of tungsten mines in the territory of the Republic of Kazakhstan and hoped that MoU between National Mineral Development Corporation (NMDC) and Kazgeology and between NMDC and Kaznex Invest could be concluded in the first quarter of 2017.

The Indian Side noted with satisfaction that Govt. of Kazakhstan had granted two year extension to the exploration contract of OVL in June 2016 and preparatory work was in progress for the planned drilling of the 2nd commitment exploration well targeting deeper reservoirs (Paleozoic) in Satpayev Block in June/ July 2017.

Both Sides agreed that there was potential for promoting investments in spheres of Oil and Gas, Civil Nuclear Energy, Uranium, Chemicals, Food Processing, Public Health, Pharmaceuticals, Information Technology and Mining and Metals. The need to augment connectivity and information exchange dissemination and promote cooperation in Service Sector was also underlined.

Visa Issues

Indian side requested the Kazakh side to further liberalise their current visa regime for Indian citizens and in this regard proposed that the second round of Consular consultation may be held in the first quarter of 2017.

MJPS