

## **India, Kazakhstan sign five key agreements to bolster ties**

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**Astana:** India and Kazakhstan today inked five key agreements including a defence pact to enhance military cooperation and a contract for supply of uranium after Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev held comprehensive talks in which they decided to actively engage in the fight against terrorism and extremism.

Modi, who held restricted as well as delegation-level talks with Nazarbayev, noted that they also agreed to work closely to expand bilateral trade by addressing structural impediments between India and hydrocarbon-rich Kazakhstan.Â

â€œWe have shared perspectives on many international issues, including regional peace, connectivity and integration; reforms in the United Nations; and, combating terrorism,â€• the Prime Minister said at a joint press event here with Nazarbayev.

Noting that the defence and security cooperation was an important dimension of strategic partnership between the two countries, Modi said, â€œWe both want to make it stronger, including in defence manufacturing.

We welcome the new Memorandum of Understanding on defence cooperation.â€• The MoU would further widen the scope of bilateral defence cooperation including regular exchange of visits, consultations, training of military personnel, military-technical cooperation, joint exercises, special forces exchanges and cooperation in UN peacekeeping operations.

Welcoming the signing of a contract between NCâ€œKazAtomPromâ€• JSC and NPCIL for a renewed long term supply of natural uranium to India to meet its energy requirements, Modi said, â€œKazakhstan was one of the first countries with which we launched civil nuclear cooperation through a uranium purchase contract.

â€œWe are pleased to have a much larger second contract now. We intend to expand cooperation in other minerals, as wellâ€•.

A joint statement â€œTej kadamâ€™ was also released after talks which said the Leaders noted the rising challenge posed by terrorism in many parts of the world and in their immediate region and underlined the importance of a stable and secure environment for peaceful economic development.Â â€œThey agreed to continue their active engagement in the fight against terrorism and extremism including exchange of information,â€• it said.

In this context, they highlighted the importance of regular inter-agency consultations and meetings of the Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism. The Leaders also called for early conclusion of the UN Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism.

Observing that Kazakhstan was Indiaâ€™s biggest economic partner in the region, Modi said, â€œBut, our relations are modest, compared to our potential. We will work together to take economic ties to a new level.â€•

The other pacts included Treaty on Transfer of Sentenced Persons, human resources, cultural exchanges and capacity building.

Modi said in his vision for Indiaâ€™s relations with Central Asia, Kazakhstan will play a â€œcritical roleâ€•.Â â€œWe 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," he said.

Modi, who was earlier accorded a red carpet welcome at the Akorda presidential palace, once again congratulated Nazarbayev on his 75th birthday and lauded his vision for Kazakhstan's progress.

The Prime Minister also gifted him a set of books relating to religions born in India which included an English translation of Guru Granth Sahib, as also specially commissioned reproductions from the manuscripts collection of National Museum, Delhi to Kazakh President. One of Jainism's most revered texts, Bhadrabahu's Kalpasutra (15th century AD) in Prakrit; one of Buddhism's most important scriptures Ashtasahasrika Prajnaparamita (12th century AD) in Sanskrit; and a Persian translation of Valmiki's Ramayana (18th century AD) in nastaliq script were also part of the reproductions.

Congratulating the people of Kazakhstan on Astana Day, the 550th Anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate and the 20th Anniversary of the Constitution of the Republic of Kazakhstan, Modi underlined the growing political and economic role of Kazakhstan, which contributes to stability and development in the region.

Modi thanked Nazarbayev for supporting the UN resolution on the International Day of Yoga and its first successful organisation on 21 June 2015 in Kazakhstan. "President Nazarbayev compliments Prime Minister Modi on success of International Day of Yoga. Calls it spiritual heritage of India," the External Affairs Ministry Spokesperson tweeted.

Expressing concern at the slow progress on the UN Security Council reform, the leaders called for concrete outcomes to be achieved in the 70th anniversary year of the UN and reaffirmed their commitment to Intergovernmental Negotiations (IGN) to comprehensively reform the Security Council including expansion in both categories of membership.

Later, the President hosted a lunch for Modi. "Across the Hindu Kush and the Pamirs, the bond of Bollywood. Awara Hoon performed at the luncheon in honour of the Prime Minister," the Spokesperson tweeted.

Later, Prime Minister Modi flew to the Russian city of Ufa where he will attend the BRICS and Shanghai Cooperation Organisation summits during the course of the next two days. Modi arrived in Ufa after visiting the Central Asian countries of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan.

He will hold bilateral meetings with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping later in the day.

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