

Recent visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.Mirziyoyev to India (Gujarat)



The President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.Mirziyoyev paid an official visit to India at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 17-18 of 2019. The head of state held talks with N.Modi and participated in the 9th international investment summit «Dynamic Gujarat».

This visit is characterized by Indian analytical circles as a «significant event», which became a logical continuation of the dialogue on development of mutually beneficial Uzbek-Indian relations.

It should be emphasized that today India is becoming an important actor in world arena, achieving high ranks in such spheres as policy, economy, security and defense.

In terms of population, India is top second country (with 1,4 billion people) and sixth in terms of GDP. According to «Global Firepower», in the ranking of military power of the world India took fourth place in 2018. At the same period India's defense spending exceeded \$46 billion. Since 2013, India has been among the largest importers of arms. IMF anticipates that India's economy will grow by an average of 8% annually until 2023. At the same time country's share in world GDP will increase from 7.7% to 9.4%.

Uzbekistan considers India as one of the leading partners in the South-Asian region and seeks for strengthening cooperation with New Delhi not only to achieve development in those sectors of the economy where India holds a leading position, but also to intensify dialogue within international and regional structures.

In its turn, New Delhi accepts Uzbekistan as a key state in Central Asia. Indian government is interested in deepening trade, economic, investment, and transport and communications ties with our country. New Delhi takes into account the national interests of Uzbekistan in resolution of regional and international issues.

In October 2018, Shavkat Mirziyoyev made the first state visit to India and signed about 20 treaties in various fields. Two sides reached an agreement to increase bilateral trade to a billion dollars.

Uzbek leader's recent visit to India was the second in the last four months. This tendency indicates the progressive development of cooperation and the existence of common mutual interests between two nations.

It should be noted that for the first time Uzbekistan joined the «Dynamic Gujarat» summit, which has been held every two years in Gandhinagar city since 2003. Undoubtedly, N.Modi, who used to be a chief Minister of Gujarat over the period 2001 to 2014, was an initiator of the «Dynamic Gujarat».

As the observers emphasize, Sh.Mirziyoyev's participation in this international event confirmed the special importance of Uzbekistan for India. This was demonstrated in following aspects. Firstly, Uzbekistan became the sole state, joining in the summit as a partner from Central Asian region, along with such countries as France, Australia, Denmark, Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway and others. Secondly, Uzbek leader was received as the main guest of the event, attended by about 3 thousand delegations from more than 100 countries and 1.5 million foreign participants. Thirdly, President Sh.Mirziyoyev was accompanied by a highly representative delegation consisting of more than 60 heads of such national agencies as ministry of foreign affairs, trade and economy, as well as large business circles of Uzbekistan.

During the Summit President Sh.Mirziyoev made a speech and proposed some initiatives to strengthen our long-term strategic partnership with India. The following proposals were put forward: 1) creation of reliable trade and transport communication systems (a Trans-Afghan railway), connecting Central and South Asian

markets; 2) joint project implementation in such vital fields as information technology, software, agriculture, alternative energy along with specialist training for these areas; 3) holding a regional business forum between Gujarat and Andijan in Uzbekistan; 4) organization of the Uzbek-Indian youth forum in our country in 2019; 5) providing the «Year of Uzbek culture» in India and the «Year of Indian culture» in Uzbekistan in 2020.

Up to date «Dynamic Gujarat» has turned from a regional investment fair into a unique international forum where officials and experts can exchange ideas, knowledge and find networking to jointly understand new business opportunities. The forum has become a platform for achieving numerous trade and investment agreements between the business communities of different countries. The comparison of total number of trade and investment deals reached in the framework of the Dynamic Gujarat's first ten year summits demonstrates positive outcomes. The number increased from 73 (in 2003) to approximately 18 thousand (in 2013) contracts.

According to observers, companies joined in the summit «Dynamic Gujarat-2019» have studied the investment opportunities of Uzbekistan in such realms of the economy as pharmaceuticals, textile and others as Tashkent offers to foreign, including Indian, investors favorable opportunities.

Indian experts highly appreciated the announcement of 2019 as the “Year of Active Investments and Social Development” in Uzbekistan as this opens the door for Indian business circles to our country, for instance, in pharmaceutical SEZs («Andijan-Pharm»). They also positively commented on the opening of a direct airline between Tashkent and Mumbai. In the long run, this route will contribute to the development of trade and economic relations between India and Central Asia.

In 2018 Uzbekistan adopted the «Strategy of Innovative Development for 2019-2021» and the «Road map» for its implementation. This strategy aims at development of human capital as a key factor to improve competitiveness of our nation. By implementing this Strategy, Uzbekistan plans to become one of the 50 leading countries in the «Global innovation index» by 2030. The dynamics of the current development of Uzbekistan is highly recognized by international community. In the annual report of the World Bank «Doing business 2018», Uzbekistan was at 74th place among 190 countries. Our country has moved up 13 positions and entered the list of top ten countries which created the most favorable conditions for business. Undoubtedly, this was achieved due to dynamic economic and political reforms, carried out under the leadership of President of our country.

As for investments, our government actively cooperates with foreign banks and other international financial institutions to conduct large-scale economic and social reforms. More exactly, Tashkent signed a deal with Indian Eximbank to provide a preferential credit line in the amount of \$200 million to finance socially important and infrastructure projects in Uzbekistan.

In accordance with bilateral contracts on mutual investment cooperation, Uzbekistan provides most-favoured-nation (MFN) treatment to 45 countries, including India. Last year, India and the Republic of Uzbekistan reached deals on implementation of 50 investment projects worth about \$ 3 billion.

Currently, Uzbekistan in cooperation with Indian partners considers the construction of an advanced information technology “Technopark” in Tashkent. Moreover, from the new academic year it is planned to open branches of Indian leading universities, specialized in ICT, «Amity» in Tashkent and «Shard» in Andijan.

In conclusion, based on the common interests Uzbek-Indian relations has been developing constructively. This is proved by Sh.Mirziyoyev's recent visit to India, which demonstrated new positive dynamics in Uzbek-Indian relations. In the long term, owing to the deals signed during the visit, strategic partnership between Tashkent and New Delhi will be deepened while bilateral cooperation take multifaceted and long-term character, ensuring the economic well-being and prosperity of the two nations.

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