

Uzbekistan-Pakistan Relations in the Spotlight of Foreign Media”



In recent years, the deepening cooperation between Uzbekistan and Pakistan has emerged as a significant new strategic direction across Eurasia. Two countries standing at the historic crossroads of ancient trade routes are now consistently building a modern “architecture of connectivity” that permeates all key areas, including the economy, culture, education, and technology. Their shared centuries-old historical roots, dating back to the era of the Great Silk Road, are being transformed into concrete projects and initiatives capable of strengthening economic resilience, ensuring technological independence, and creating a solid foundation for regional integration.

Since the early 2020s, relations between Tashkent and Islamabad have been developing steadily, largely driven by the strong political will of the leaders of both countries. The Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, signed in 2021, set a high pace for bilateral dialogue, opening a new chapter in the history of relations. Regular meetings at the highest level, active consultations between the foreign ministries, and engagement within international forums make it possible to address pressing issues in a timely manner, identify mutually acceptable solutions, and explore promising areas of cooperation.

A vivid confirmation of the strengthening bilateral ties was the official visit of the Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif to Uzbekistan in February 2025 and his meeting with President Shavkat Mirziyoyev. The leaders of both countries expressed deep satisfaction with the impressive dynamics of multifaceted cooperation encompassing the economy, investment, transport, digital technologies, and cultural and humanitarian exchanges.

Admiring the achievements of Uzbekistan’s large-scale reforms under the Presidency of Shavkat Mirziyoyev, Shehbaz Sharif stated that “miracles are possible only through a clear vision, high dynamism, hard work, and a resolute pursuit of a common goal.”

The culmination of the Prime Minister's visit was the establishment of the High-Level Strategic Partnership Council, which imparted a new strategic impetus to bilateral relations. This step not only consolidated the prior agreements but also created a strong institutional platform for systematic cooperation.

The legislative framework of bilateral cooperation plays a key role in strengthening strategic interaction between Uzbekistan and Pakistan. A special contribution in this regard is made by inter-parliamentary friendship groups, which consistently promote legislative initiatives aimed at simplifying business procedures, increasing transparency, and creating a reliable legal environment for the implementation of joint projects. Their work forms a long-term platform of trust that ensures stability and predictability in bilateral relations.

The economic sector, in turn, serves as the most visible indicator of cooperation dynamics. Pakistan confidently ranks among Uzbekistan's leading trade partners in South Asia, demonstrating strong interest in the Uzbek market. Over recent years, bilateral trade turnover has increased manifold and continues to grow steadily. In 2025, mutual trade exceeded \$440 million, which is twelve times higher than in 2016, with particular attention drawn to Uzbek exports amounting to over \$320 million.

These figures not only reflect the growing interest of businesses in both countries in expanding mutually beneficial cooperation but also demonstrate the emergence of a more diversified and resilient trade model incorporating new industries and segments. The current environment creates a foundation for further development of investment flows, financial services, and joint projects in mining, energy, and digital technologies, opening additional opportunities for deepening strategic partnership.

In line with agreements reached at the highest level, concrete steps have been outlined to increase bilateral trade turnover to \$2 billion in the near future.

An important tool for achieving this goal has been the Preferential Trade Agreement between the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, which provides customs benefits for 17 categories of goods from each side. This significantly facilitates market entry for companies and stimulates the expansion of trade flows.

At the same time, business ties are expanding rapidly. An increasing number of Uzbek and Pakistani companies are finding partners, establishing joint ventures, and exploring new niches. As of October 1, 2025, around 180 companies with Pakistani capital are operating in Uzbekistan, reflecting growing business confidence in joint projects and long-term partnership.

Cooperation spans a wide range of sectors – from the textile and food industries to the production of construction materials, electrical equipment, and logistics. Regular meetings of the intergovernmental commission, business forums, and specialized exhibitions serve as effective platforms for direct dialogue, experience exchange, and contract signing. The agreements concluded at these venues already amount to hundreds of millions of dollars, generating tangible economic returns and laying a solid foundation for further expansion of cooperation.

In 2024, Tashkent hosted the first International Exhibition "Made in Pakistan" and a joint Logistics Forum, featuring more than 80 leading Pakistani companies. These events created a platform for direct business dialogue, demonstrating real opportunities for joint ventures and logistics cooperation.

In turn, a national exhibition "Made in Uzbekistan" was held in Lahore in February 2025, resulting in the signing of 181 bilateral trade agreements worth \$500 million. These events clearly illustrate mutual interest in expanding trade turnover and growing business confidence in bilateral cooperation prospects.

Significant progress has also been achieved in investment cooperation. In 2024, \$33 million in Pakistani investments were utilized within joint projects, and from January to July 2025 this figure more than doubled, reaching nearly \$70 million. This steady growth reflects increasing interest in long-term projects, confirms the stability of the business environment, and opens new opportunities for expanding strategic

partnership.

Active work continues on joint projects in the textile, pharmaceutical, perfumery, and agricultural sectors, allowing both sides to strengthen traditional industries while developing new high value-added niches. Notably, Uzbek companies are conducting feasibility studies in Pakistan for the production of household appliances, tractors, smart meters, and modern gas blocks, opening avenues for technological exchange and the adoption of advanced manufacturing solutions.

Particular attention is paid to the digital sphere, where a broad range of promising initiatives is emerging: software development, IT solutions for business and public services, and joint startups and innovation projects. This direction accelerates technological modernization, enhances competitiveness, and facilitates the integration of digital products into key sectors of the economy.

Trade infrastructure development is also a key priority. In 2025, Uzbek trade houses were opened in Lahore and Karachi, with plans to establish Pakistani trade missions in Tashkent and Samarkand. These initiatives simplify market access, stimulate business cooperation, and strengthen trust within the business community.

Thus, the combination of industrial, digital, and infrastructure cooperation creates a multi-level platform for accelerated bilateral development, transforming Uzbek-Pakistani cooperation into a strategically significant and mutually beneficial endeavor.

Transport infrastructure remains a priority area of dialogue. Central and South Asia have historically been interconnected through trade and cultural routes, and today targeted efforts are underway to restore this natural connectivity. Improved logistics, new transport corridors, and simplified transit procedures create real opportunities to boost trade and deepen cooperation. For landlocked Central Asian countries, reliable transport links are a key factor in sustainable growth and regional integration.

One of the flagship projects is the Trans-Afghan Railway, a strategic corridor capable of transforming regional transport networks, strengthening the countries' positions within the Eurasian economic space, and establishing a solid foundation for trade, investment, and logistics flows between Central and South Asia. By reducing delivery times from several weeks to 3-5 days and cutting transport costs by 40% or more, the route will significantly enhance the competitiveness of regional goods on global markets and stimulate export-import activity.

In 2025, tangible progress was achieved: key components of the feasibility study were prepared, and intergovernmental consultations on the route design and financing terms continue, reinforcing the project's practical implementation.

Energy cooperation is another vital area with significant joint potential. Projects in geological exploration, oil and gas development, and modernization of processing facilities can ensure strategic energy security, diversify energy sources, and stimulate industrial growth in both countries.

Along with economic cooperation, cultural and humanitarian interaction is actively developing, as the peoples of Uzbekistan and Pakistan share a rich historical heritage rooted in the Silk Road era. This commonality manifests in joint scientific projects, educational initiatives, and cultural exchanges that strengthen human ties and build long-term trust.

In Pakistan, special attention is given to the President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's concept of the Third Renaissance, viewed as a continuity of Uzbekistan's rich historical and scientific legacy. The intellectual and spiritual traditions shaped by scholars such as Al-Horezmi, Mirzo Ulugbek, and Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur inspire modern educational and innovation initiatives, reinforcing cultural and intellectual bonds between the two nations.

Tourism deserves special mention as an important component of bilateral cooperation. Uzbekistan, with its

unique spiritual and architectural heritage, is increasingly attracting Pakistani tourists and pilgrims. Ancient cities and the mausoleums of prominent scholars – Imam Bukhari, Imam Termezi, and Bahauddin Naqshband – reveal the country's rich cultural and scientific traditions while strengthening people-to-people ties as enduring as official interstate agreements.

Improved transport connectivity has become a key catalyst. Direct flights between Islamabad and Tashkent, as well as between Tashkent and Lahore, enabled over 10,000 Pakistani tourists to visit Uzbekistan in 2025 – nearly 2.5 times more than in 2023. This data highlights both growing demand for tourism routes and the effectiveness of integration measures in transport and logistics.

Taken together, tourism, cultural, and economic initiatives form a solid platform for deepening connectivity between Uzbekistan and Pakistan. This comprehensive cooperation model not only enhances economic potential but also strengthens long-term trust, making bilateral relations a key component of regional integration between Central and South Asia.

The upcoming visit of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev to Islamabad early February 2026 will mark an important milestone in enhancing strategic partnership. It will open new opportunities for joint initiatives, activate projects in the economy, transport, energy, and digital technologies, and provide additional momentum to cooperation, enhancing its practical impact and strategic significance.

Today, it is especially important to maintain the high momentum of interaction, expand practical cooperation mechanisms, cascade dialogue to lower governance levels, and more actively engage regions, small and medium-sized enterprises, the academic community, youth, and civil society institutions. Such a comprehensive approach will not only consolidate achievements but also ensure sustainable growth of mutual cooperation, creating a platform for new joint projects and initiatives at all levels.

Thus, the “bridges of friendship” built between Uzbekistan and Pakistan – rooted in shared history, traditions, and spiritual affinity – connect the past and present while opening the way for deeper comprehensive cooperation. They transform traditional mutual trust into sustainable and long-term partnership forms that will serve as a foundation for expanding interaction at all levels, from local initiatives to strategic projects of regional significance.

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