

India, Uzbekistan to fight terror, promote regional stability

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"Despite the presence of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, the production of opium, instead of decreasing it, has gone up," Karimov said.

"The main issue is to address the problem in Afghanistan, which accounts for 80 per cent of the total global production of opium," he said.

"We have been establishing different groups but what is the use of these if the problem is not addressed at the source?" said the Uzbek President as he called for greater cooperation between India and Uzbekistan in promoting stability in Afghanistan and in the region.

"Uzbekistan will support India's well-balanced policy on terror," Karimov said.

He also reiterated his country's firm support for "India's presence in an expanded U.N. Security Council".

Later, a memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between India and Uzbekistan for the establishment of an Uzbekistan-India Entrepreneurship Centre in the Uzbek capital, which will be the training ground for young business entrepreneurs and lead to generation of extra employment.

Another accord was signed between the Indian Ministry of Coal and Mines and the State Committee of Uzbekistan for cooperation in the field of geology and mineral resources. Two accords on energy cooperation were signed — one MoU was signed between the Indian Ministry of Petroleum and the national holding company of Uzbekneftegaz and the other was inked between the Gas Authority of India Limited (GAIL) and Uzbekneftegaz. Three other pacts are in the fields of agriculture, trade and education. India also offered to set up satellite-based tele-education and tele-medicine facilities in Uzbekistan. The two countries agreed to "qualitatively enhance commercial and economic relationship" and intensify cooperation in sectors of knowledge industry like information technology (IT).

Prime Minister Singh also inaugurated a centre for teaching information technology in Tashkent on April 26, named after India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

Called Jawaharlal Nehru India-Uzbekistan Centre for Information and Technology, the institute symbolises the "modern and dynamic face" of India's engagement with developing countries of Central Asia, especially Uzbekistan, and seeks to transmit its proven



Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh and German Chancellor Dr. Angela Merkel inaugurating the India Pavilion at the Hanover Fair in Germany on April 23. Also seen in the photo are Union Minister for Commerce and Industry Kamal Nath and the Union Minister of Science and Technology and Ocean Development Kapil Sibal. (Photo: Press Information Bureau)

expertise in knowledge industries like IT to these countries.

"Investment in education and training is an investment in the future of the country," Manmohan Singh said as Uzbek Prime Minister Mirziyayev looked on.

"We have been establishing different groups but what is the use of these if the problem (of drug production and trafficking) is not addressed at the source?" said the Uzbek President as he called for greater cooperation between India and Uzbekistan in promoting stability in Afghanistan and in the region.

"I am confident that the centre will train knowledge workers in Uzbekistan to enable them to compete with confidence in the global marketplace," Manmohan Singh said.

Earlier, during his three-day visit to Germany, the Prime Minister on April 23 held talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on a wide range of bilateral issues, including trade and technological ties, military cooperation, energy security and civil nuclear coop-

eration in Hanover. Germany indicated its willingness to support the India-U.S. civil nuclear deal if it clears the U.S. Congress.

"We will be following closely the process of ratification in the U.S. Congress and the discussions within the NSG (Nuclear Suppliers Group)," Chancellor Merkel said after her talks with the Prime Minister.

"The two countries also agreed to further deepen their strategic and security dialogue and work towards an agreement on bilateral defence cooperation," said a joint statement issued at the end of the talks.

Later, the two leaders, who were meeting for the first time, jointly inaugurated the Hanover Fair on April 23, where India is the partner country.

Manmohan Singh made a strong pitch for attracting German investments in key sectors of the Indian economy in a speech after inaugurating the Hanover Fair.

Stressing on intensifying trade between the two countries, Manmohan Singh said they were close to reaching the bilateral target of 10 billion euros. At the Hannover Fair Prime Minister Singh and Chancellor Merkel on April 24 inaugurated the India Pavilion that showcased the country's new business and technological prowess to the world.

Later, Manmohan Singh and Merkel opened the Indo-German business summit that was attended by German businessmen representing the industrial elite of that country. Singh also met the president of Bundestag (German Parliament) Norbert Lammert in Berlin. ■