

Minister of State for External Affairs Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi's visit to Uzbekistan (September 23-26, 2021)

September 26, 2021

Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture (MoS), Smt. Meenakashi Lekhi visited Uzbekistan from 23-26 September 2021. This was her first official visit to any Central Asian country after assuming charge.

2. MoS met with Uzbek Foreign Minister H.E. Mr. Abdulaziz Kamilov during which they touched upon important areas of bilateral, regional and multilateral cooperation. MoS emphasised on expeditious implementation of development projects in Uzbekistan under the USD 1 billion Line of Credit. Both sides also agreed for concluding their ongoing negotiations at the earliest for the proposed Bilateral Investment Agreement. The discussions dwelt upon the importance of maintaining close and regular consultations on the evolving situation in Afghanistan and the need to ensure that the territory of Afghanistan is not allowed to be used for any terror activities. MoS conveyed India's full support to the current Uzbek Presidency of the SCO.

3. During the visit, MoS also met with the Culture Minister of Uzbekistan H.E. Mr. Ozodbek Nazarbekov. They had a productive discussion on further intensifying cooperation in different spheres of culture given the deep cultural and civilisational connect between India and Uzbekistan. These included cooperation in the field of archives, films, preservation of Buddhist sites, creation of 'India Study Rooms' in different Universities of Uzbekistan, translation of literary works etc . The Cultural Exchange Programme for the period 2021-25 was signed during the visit. A 50-member strong Indian delegation comprising film personalities of India will be participating in the Tashkent Film Festival next week.

4. MoS had a number of speaking engagements during her visit. These included a lecture on 'India's democratic traditions' at the Tashkent State University of Law and an address on 'India-Uzbekistan relations- Strengthening Strategic Partnership' at the Bukhara State University as part of " Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. She met distinguished indologists from the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies and other institutions and discussed ways to further promote India studies and philosophy in Uzbekistan.

5. MoS also had interactions with members of the Indian community in Tashkent and Indian students at Samarkand State Medical Institute. She highlighted the positive contribution of the Indian diaspora

abroad in strengthening of India's relations with other countries including Uzbekistan. The Indian community was also encouraged to participate actively in the celebrations of Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav.

6. The visit provided further momentum to our strategic partnership with Uzbekistan by maintaining regular political exchanges and further consolidating our cultural ties.

New Delhi

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