

CONFERENCE  
REPORT

2024

**MERI**

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES

**REPORT ON  
THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
CONFERENCE**

New Delhi, Nov 08, 2024



011-40554679



[cis.meri.edu.in](http://cis.meri.edu.in)



[cis@meri.edu.in](mailto:cis@meri.edu.in)

# MERI

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES



## A REPORT ON THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

on

**India's Relations with Central and Southeast Asia:  
Challenges and Opportunities**

**ORGANISED BY**  
MANAGEMENT EDUCATION RESEARCH INSTITUTE (MERI),  
CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDIES (CIS)  
NEW DELHI

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# INTRODUCTION



1.1 An International Conference on **India's Relations with Central and Southeast Asia: Challenges and Opportunities** was organised by the Centre for International Studies (CIS), Management Education Research Institute (MERI), in New Delhi on November 08, 2024. Thirty experts from India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, United Kingdom (UK) and Uzbekistan participated in the Conference. MERI had earlier organised three Dialogues. The said conference was the fourth One known as the MERI Dialogue 4.0.



1.2 Eighteen scholars made presentations. A copy of the Conference Programme and list of participants are placed at Annexures # 1 and 2 respectively.



1.3 The Conference was attended by 50 experts from the Diplomatic Academy, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tashkent, Uzbekistan, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi, Asia in Global Affairs, Kolkata, India Central Asia Foundation, New Delhi, NatStrat, New Delhi, former diplomats from the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, former bureaucrat from the Ministry of Commerce & Industry, Government of India, Joint Foreign Chambers of Commerce (JFCC), Thailand, United News of India (UNI), University of Cambridge, scholars & faculties from MERI Group of Institutions, New Delhi, diplomats from the embassies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Finland and other Track II organisations.

# OBJECTIVES

**2.1** The conference brought together domain experts, diplomats, academicians, research scholars and students to discuss the growing importance of Central and Southeast Asia in international arena. The conference was aimed at fostering dialogue and rejuvenating India's historical, economic, cultural, and strategic ties with the Central and Southeast Asian countries. India's political, national security and economic policy objectives are dynamic and need to be constantly reviewed and modified based on emerging developments in the neighbourhood and extended neighbourhood. India would like to enhance economic engagement with Central and Southeast Asian countries. The said conference examined the possibilities of enhancing India's cooperation on issues of common interest pertaining to security, economic engagement and people to people relations.

**2.2** It attempted to assess the importance of historical links in today's context. In view of India's growing strategic, geopolitical, economic and cultural interests in Central and Southeast Asia, such an assessment would be useful. It explored current connectivity and possibility of establishing new linkages thereby connecting India with Central and Southeast Asia. The main objectives included the followings:

- To gain in-depth knowledge of historical ties of India with Central and Southeast Asia
- To examine economic ties between India and Central & Southeast Asian countries
- To understand the challenges that obstructs India's relations with Central and Southeast Asia.
- To explore the possibilities of cooperation to consolidate bilateral and multilateral ties between India, Central and Southeast Asia.

# OBJECTIVES

**2.3 The one - day conference had three Working Sessions apart from the inaugural and the concluding sessions:**

## **Inaugural Session**

**Session # 1:** Economic Ties (Energy, Trade & Commerce, Connectivity)

**Session # 2:** Role of Soft Power in Enhancing Cooperation

**Session # 3:** Economic Ties (Energy, Trade & Commerce, Connectivity)

Concluding Session: Methods and Concepts for Advancing Trade and Cooperation between India, Central and Southeast Asia

# POINTS FROM PAPERS/SPEECHES

## INAUGURAL SESSION

3.1 The inaugural ceremony started with the lighting the lamp and singing of national anthem. Prof Lalit Aggarwal, Vice-President, MERI Group of Institutions welcomed the delegates and participants on behalf of the Triveni Education and Social Welfare Society. In his welcoming remarks, Prof Aggarwal said that the current global order marked by armed conflicts, shifting alliances, economic volatility and escalating security threats has placed India's foreign policy at the pivotal juncture. The country's rise to prominence and emergence as the fifth largest economy, accounting for 17.76% of the world's population, has made its external relations an important component of its national interest. India is seeking to redefine its role as a major power driving and capitalizing on shifts in the global order.

In this context, there is a need for analysis of India's emergence as a major power expanding its global footprint to secure its interest in trade and commerce through mutual cooperation and partnership covering bilateral and multilateral agenda. Post G20 Summit in Delhi last year, Indian diplomacy and strategic interests have been amplified at the regional and global arena.

So it is pertinent to note that in a decentralized world order, India has pursued its strategic autonomy in the domain of foreign policy by joining diverse regional and international groupings.





## INAUGURAL SESSION

India has played a constructive role in stability and order in this region by providing massive economic assistance to Afghanistan in terms of it building its infrastructure, providing humanitarian aid to the wartorn country. As far as the connectivity is concerned, the completion of Chabahar Port in Iran and the vigorous implementation of India's Connect Central Asia policy launched in 2012 during the first India Central Asia dialog are encouraging. Central Asia is a consumer market for a range of goods and services.



Both India and Central Asia need economic collaboration in terms of markets and diverse resources which can be pooled for broader regional cooperation in Asia.

The economic cooperation is possible through joint ventures in banking, insurance, agriculture, information technology, pharmaceutical industry, to name a few. In the context of Southeast Asia, India have civilizational ties with the countries in the region, sharing religion and culture from ancient times.



The Southeast Asia, stretching from Myanmar on India's border to Indonesia, has great geopolitical and cultural affinity with the Indian subcontinent, which has been the fulcrum of the Indian Ocean region.

Together, if the connectivity and other issues are solved and if collective economic opportunities are explored, it would contribute immensely in enhancing regional cooperation and integration.

# POINTS FROM PAPERS/SPEECHES

3.2 Mr. Sardor Rustambaev, ambassador of Uzbekistan to India, emphasized the importance of analyzing India's rise as a major continental power in Asia, expanding its global presence through trade, commerce and strategic partnerships. Mr. Rustambaev also noted India's pursuit of strategic autonomy in foreign policy, reflected in its membership in key international forums like BRICS, SCO, G-20, and QUAD, as well as its deep-rooted civilizational and cultural ties with South Asia



3.3 Prof Khaydarov mentioned that India joined the Silk Road across the Himalayas, Afghanistan in the north, Iran in the west and China in the east. It is on record that traders from Multan (present day West Punjab) and Sindh (all now part of Pakistan), Gujarat, Kashmir and other parts of India traveled to Afghanistan and Central Asia by land. India also traded with Iran on the west and Southeast Asian countries. Items like fine muslin and pashmina, spices, salt, herbs and precious stones were exported from India. As the Mauryan Empire spread to Afghanistan, Buddhism also spread in the region. Even today there are a number of Sarais (inns) and Buddhist statues in the Central Asian region, valued by the locals.



## INAUGURAL SESSION

**3.4** English edition of the book on “India-Uzbekistan Perspectives on Connectivity between South and Central Asia” edited by Prof (Dr) Ramakant Dwivedi, Head, CIS, MERI and Prof Abdusamat Khaydarov, Director, Diplomatic Academy, UWED, Tashkent was released. The book is published by Pentagon Press, New Delhi in English language and Diplomatic Academy, UWED, Tashkent, Uzbekistan in Russian and Uzbek languages. Earlier, Russian and Uzbek editions were released in Tashkent on Oct 23, 2024 where Indian ambassador to Uzbekistan Mrs Smita Pant, Prof (Dr) Ramakant Dwivedi, Head, CIS, MERI, New Delhi apart from other dignitaries were present.

**3.5** This book focuses on current trends in relations between the two countries. It contains a detailed examination of the cultural, historical, political, diplomatic and economic aspects of India – Uzbekistan cooperation at the bilateral and international levels. Both countries are poised to play significant roles in international affairs and the book advances knowledge in understanding how and why these developments have occurred. The book provides valuable and timely insights into the contours of their foreign policies and emerging trends of importance to students and scholars of regional and international affairs around the world. Management Education Research Institute, New Delhi and Diplomatic Academy, University of World Economy and Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan hope that this book would contribute towards a greater and enlightened appreciation of Indo-Uzbek relations and advance common interests in Central Asia and other regions. Both believe that this book would be of use at the Track I and Track II levels of engagement. It is likely to be of direct interest to scholars, policy makers, diplomats, entrepreneurs, academics and decision makers in both countries as well as those with a general interest in Central Asia.



## INAUGURAL SESSION

**3.6** Prof. Abdusamat Khaydarov, Director, Diplomatic Academy, University of World Economy and Diplomacy Ministry (UWED), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tashkent, Uzbekistan highlighted on-going diplomatic efforts to enhance India's role in Central and Southeast Asia. He emphasized the region's strong geopolitical and cultural ties with India, positioning it as a key player in the Indian Ocean's strategic dynamics.

**3.7** Shri I.P. Aggarwal, Hon'ble Chairman, Triveni Educational & Social Welfare Society, New Delhi, underlined India's economic and political diplomacy in fostering mutually beneficial outcomes for all stakeholders in Central, South and Southeast Asia.



# Session # 1

## Economic Ties (Energy, Trade & Commerce, Connectivity)

**3.8** The first session underscored the critical role of economic ties in an increasingly interconnected world. In shaping global growth, stability, and development, economic relationships between nations are pivotal. At the core of these connections lie three key areas: energy, trade and commerce & connectivity. These pillars not only fuel economic growth but also promote deeper geopolitical cooperation and integration across borders. India and Central Asia share a long-standing history of economic, political and cultural ties, which have evolved into a stable and mature partnership in an ever-changing global landscape.

Central Asian countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan present significant opportunities and challenges for an emerging power like India both from geopolitical and geo-economic perspective. These nations, with their strategic positioning and resource wealth, offer avenues for collaboration that can enhance India's role on the global stage, while also presenting complex dynamics that require careful navigation.



3.9 : The session was chaired by Ambassador Ashok Kumar Sharma, former Indian Ambassador to Kazakhstan. Ambassador Sharma highlighted the critical role of economic ties in an increasingly interconnected world, emphasizing that energy, trade, and connectivity are fundamental pillars driving global growth, stability, and development.



These areas, noted by him are essential for fostering deeper geopolitical cooperation and cross-border integration. He addressed the challenges in export and import between India and China, highlighting India's difficulty in competing with China's goods. Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, holds significant energy potential, with vast reserves in hydropower and oil & gas. These nations are actively seeking investment, with \$7 billion in energy projects, but face export hurdles due to inadequate infrastructure. The TAPI pipeline promises enhanced energy security and improved relations between India, Pakistan and Turkmenistan. Additionally, downstream industries, including fertilizers and polymers, offer growth prospects. Indian companies, particularly in agricultural technology, have the potential to modernize farming in the region, while Gautam Adani has expressed interest in major infrastructure and energy ventures.

3.10 Dr. Anita Sengupta, Director, Asia in Global Affairs, Kolkata, emphasized the critical role of connectivity in driving economic growth and fostering technological collaboration between India and Central Asia. She outlined three key areas of potential:

- **Tourism & Infrastructure:** Improved connectivity can significantly enhance tourism and infrastructure development, fostering both economic growth and cultural exchange.
- **IT & Crypto currency:** India and Central Asia have opportunities to collaborate in the fields of IT and crypto currency, with countries like Kazakhstan exploring digital finance and block chain technologies.
- **AI & Robotics:** Leveraging India's expertise in software and engineering, there is considerable potential for supporting Central Asia's growth in AI and robotics, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing and agriculture.

Dr. Sengupta advocates for strengthening regional ties through enhanced connectivity in technology, tourism and infrastructure, highlighting the mutual benefits of these collaborations.



**3.11** Dr. Raj Kumar Sharma, Senior Fellow at Natstrat, New Delhi discussed the challenges arising from the loss of direct trade routes to Central Asia, which compels India to route trade through third countries, leading to increased costs and delays. India's trade with the region currently totals \$2 billion, with Kazakhstan being the largest partner.

Uzbekistan accounts around for \$760 million in trade. Despite connectivity challenges, both Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan present substantial potential for future economic growth and collaboration, particularly in sectors such as energy, infrastructure, and technology. Both countries are major producers of uranium, offering significant opportunities for energy cooperation. Additionally, educational collaborations are growing, with institutions like Sharda University and Amity University expanding their presence by opening branches in these countries.



**3.12** Professor Shankari Sundaraman, Chairperson, Centre for Indo-Pacific Studies (CIPS), School of International Studies, JNU, New Delhi, addressed India's strategic positioning within the Indo-Pacific region, emphasizing the economic dimensions and overarching strategic objectives. She critically examined India's "Look East to Act East" policy, highlighting that many of its intended outcomes have not been fully realized. Among the key challenges identified were:

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**CONNECTIVITY  
DEFICITS**

- These persistent gaps impede trade flows and hinder deeper regional integration, restricting India's ability to strengthen its economic ties within the region.

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**CULTURAL  
BARRIERS**

- Despite India's geographical proximity to Southeast Asia, cultural and historical differences continue to pose obstacles to the development of deeper bilateral relations and cooperation.

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**DOMESTIC  
INSECURITIES**

- Internal challenges, such as socio-political instability and security concerns, limit India's capacity to project influence on the global stage effectively.
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Professor Sundaraman further argued that India's approach to the ASEAN bloc should extend beyond the lens of security partnership. ASEAN, she contended, must be recognized as a vital economic partner in India's broader regional strategy, with a focus on fostering deeper economic integration and collaboration rather than merely addressing security concerns.

**3.13** Dr. Ajay Dua, former Secretary, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, emphasised Southeast Asia’s crucial role in India’s geopolitical and economic strategy. India’s "Act East" policy has evolved to include partnerships in technology, infrastructure, healthcare and defence, expanding beyond cultural and diplomatic ties. As an ASEAN dialogue partner and participant in the ASEAN-India Summit, India is committed to fostering regional stability through economic and security cooperation. With China’s growing influence in Southeast Asia, particularly through the South China Sea and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), ASEAN countries increasingly view India as a counterbalance.

**3.14** India’s contributions—focused on enhancing local capacities without creating dependency—are well-received, especially in advanced manufacturing, digital technology and healthcare, supporting sustainable economic growth and job creation in the region.



**3.15** Dr. Asim Mishra, correspondent from the DD News, provided insights into the deep-rooted cultural connection between India and Southeast Asia, a bond that spans millennia. India's influence in Southeast Asia is seen in the shared heritage of Hindu and Buddhist practices, art forms, and architectural styles across the region.

Nations like Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam display Indian cultural imprints in their temples, rituals and societal customs, showing a strong integration of Indian traditions like Hindu deities in art and Sanskrit language in inscriptions. Dr. Mishra emphasized that these cultural bonds are not merely historical but continue to inspire and shape modern relations. India's "Act East" policy has been instrumental in enhancing ties in tourism, education, culture and economic arenas with Southeast Asia.



**3.16** Dr. Nimmual Piewthongngam, joined the conference online via ZOOM app, highlighted the ASEAN-India Free Trade Area (AIFTA) as a transformative economic bridge between India and Southeast Asia, connecting over 2 billion people.

Since its establishment in 2010, AIFTA has reduced tariffs on many products, enhancing trade in electronics, textiles and automotive industries. However, ASEAN's exports to India have grown faster than India's to ASEAN, creating an imbalance. Addressing this requires stronger investments in sectors like healthcare, infrastructure, and technology, which could deepen economic ties and create more balanced growth. This partnership strengthens regional resilience and positions both regions advantageously in global trade.



**3.17** Dr. Rajendra Khimesra, Chairman of the India-Thailand Chamber of Commerce, also joined the conference via Zoom, emphasized the strong and growing ties between India and Southeast Asia, rooted in deep cultural and historical connections.

These relations, developed over centuries of trade, shared religious practices, and cultural exchanges, have been further bolstered by India's "Act East" policy. Dr. Khimesra highlighted the importance of economic cooperation, particularly in defence, trade, and regional security, as central to this partnership.

**India's increased involvement in regional forums and military exercises, along with strategic collaborations with countries like Vietnam and Indonesia, has strengthened ties. This cooperation fosters mutual benefits in areas such as maritime security and infrastructure development.**

**MERI**  
DIALOGUE

## MERI DIALOGUE 4.0

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON

**India's Relations with Central and  
Southeast Asia: Challenges & Opportunities**

**Dr. Rajendra Khimesra**  
**Chairman, Thailand**



## Session # 2

### Role of Soft Power in Enhancing Cooperation

3.18 The Second session highlighted the diverse and dynamic strategies employed by India in its diplomatic and cultural engagement efforts. It emphasized how India's soft power can enhance its influence and promote deeper cooperation across Southeast Asia. Experts explored the impact of media, cultural exchanges, and technological advancements in shaping a positive image of India, thereby strengthening its international relations and fostering greater collaboration in the region.

India's aspiration to establish itself as a regional power in South Asia—a region once referred to by Jawaharlal Nehru as its "backyard"—has faced significant setbacks. Two primary factors can be attributed to this: first, India's approach towards managing relations with the smaller South Asian states; and second, the growing influence of China, coupled with the increased involvement of Western powers in the domestic affairs of these states.



**3.19** Mr. Ajay Kumar Kaul, Chief Editor of United News of India (UNI), highlighted the significant impact of media on international relations.

He discussed how responsible journalism can foster mutual understanding and empathy between India and Southeast Asian nations, helping to counter stereotypes and build trust. Mr. Kaul emphasized the media's potential to bridge cultural divides, stressing the importance of accurate and respectful portrayals of diverse cultures.

He argued that this role aligns with India's broader soft power strategy, where cultivating **a positive and inclusive image plays a key role in strengthening ties with countries across Southeast Asia.**



**3.20** Dr. Yhing Sawheny, Senior Lecturer and Director of International Affairs at Siam University in Thailand, shared her insights on the role of cultural diplomacy. Drawing on her personal connection to India through her family's heritage, Dr. Sawheny highlighted the cultural affinities between India and Thailand, which have fostered a deep bond for her.

She emphasized that cultural diplomacy goes beyond formal exchanges, focusing on building relationships grounded in shared values and mutual respect. Referring to Prime Minister Modi's October 2024 visit to Vietnam, Dr. Sawheny illustrated how high-level diplomatic visits play a pivotal role in strengthening both cultural and economic ties.

She outlined how the visit included initiatives to promote language exchange programs, cultural festivals, and educational partnerships and pave the way for future collaborations across economic and political spheres.



**3.21** Mr. Alok Vijayant, currently Managing Director of Sciroit Technologies and former Senior Director, NSA's Office, PMO, Govt of India, provided a technology-driven perspective on India's growing influence.

His discussion focused on the transformative potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in modern diplomacy. Mr. Vijayant explained how AI could drive regional cooperation by offering innovative solutions to shared challenges, such as urban planning, healthcare, and environmental sustainability.

He stressed the importance of ethical considerations in AI development, emphasizing the need for policies that ensure its responsible use and prevent misuse. By leading in both AI research and ethical standards, Mr. Vijayant suggested, India could position itself as a key partner for Southeast Asian countries seeking to harness technology for their own development objectives.



**3.22** Dr. Siddhartha Shanker Saxena, Director, Cambridge Central Asia Forum at Jesus College, University of Cambridge, shared his perspective on India's potential as a leader in software innovation

Drawing on his interdisciplinary research, Dr. Saxena highlighted how software technology could become a central pillar of India's economic growth. He noted that the global software market is expanding rapidly and India possesses the talent and resources to capitalize on this growth.

By enhancing collaboration with Southeast Asian countries - particularly in areas such as digital infrastructure and cyber security - India could foster a mutually beneficial ecosystem. Dr. Saxena further emphasized the role of Indian universities and companies in supporting this growth through skill-based training programs for Southeast Asian partners, thereby solidifying India's position as a regional technology leader.



## Session # 3

### Political Relations and Regional Geopolitics. Methods and Concepts for Advancing Trade and Cooperation between India, Central and Southeast Asia

**3.23** The third session examined India's evolving political strategies and diplomatic engagements across Asia, with a particular focus on the intricate geopolitical dynamics of Central and Southeast Asia. The session underscored the significance of promoting stability through regional cooperation, understanding cultural nuances, and effectively managing power balances among the key players in the region.

Drawing on a wealth of diplomatic and academic expertise, the speakers provided valuable insights into India's potential to serve as a stabilizing force within Asia's complex geopolitical framework.



**3.24** Ambassador Gitesh Sarma, former Secretary (West), Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, drawing on his extensive diplomatic experience, provided a comprehensive overview of India's multi-dimensional approach to geopolitics in Asia.

He outlined India's foreign policy priorities, emphasizing the delicate balance India seeks to maintain between its relationships with global superpowers such as the United States and China, while simultaneously strengthening ties with its neighbouring countries.

Ambassador Sarma highlighted India's commitment to regional peace and security, underscoring its active participation in multilateral organizations, including the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO).

He noted that India's engagement in these forums goes beyond the pursuit of influence; it is a concerted effort to foster an inclusive platform where nations can collaboratively address shared challenges such as terrorism, economic development, and climate change. He further underscored India's unique position as a regional leader and its responsibility to drive cooperative solutions to regional issues, particularly as it navigates its relationships with both emerging and established powers in the region.



**3.25** Dr. Rakesh Khurana Advisor, MERI Group of Institutions, spoke about India's unique strengths in the diplomatic arena. He highlighted the richness of India's cultural diversity, which allows it to connect with a wide range of countries on a cultural level, from the West Asia to Southeast Asia.

Dr. Khurana noted that India's democratic values and pluralistic society are significant assets in its diplomatic engagements, as they resonate with many nations that share or aspire to similar ideals. He discussed India's proactive role in organizing cultural events, international forums and summits that bring together representatives from diverse backgrounds.

These initiatives, he argued, reinforce India's position as a unifying force in the region. He pointed out that India's commitment to diplomatic professionalism is demonstrated through its well-trained diplomats, who use their understanding of local customs and values to foster strong relationships. He concluded by emphasizing that India's blend of cultural inclusivity and diplomatic expertise makes it uniquely positioned to play a leading role in shaping the region's future.



**3.26** Professor Sanjay Kumar Pandey, Centre for Russian and Central Asian Studies (CRCAS), School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), provided valuable insights into India's strategic interests in Central Asia.

He explained that the region's pivotal location and rich natural resources make it a critical focal point for India's foreign policy. He traced the historical ties between India and Central Asia, dating back to the ancient Silk Road trade routes, which facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and culture.

He noted that this deep historical connection continues to serve as the foundation for a robust partnership rooted in mutual respect and shared interests. Focusing on contemporary concerns, he emphasized that Central Asia holds significant potential as a source of energy resources for India, particularly in natural gas, oil and uranium

.He discussed India's on going investments in energy and infrastructure projects across the region, such as pipeline construction and transport networks, which aim to secure India's energy future while simultaneously benefiting the Central Asian economies. He highlighted India's efforts to strengthen cultural and educational exchanges with Central Asia, fostering deeper people-to-people connections and cultivating a shared sense of heritage between the two regions.



**3.27** Professor M. Badrul Alam, former Director of Research and Head of the Department of Political Science, Jamia Millia Islamia University, offered valuable insights into the resilience strategies of small but diplomatically influential nations.

He commended Qatar for its adept navigation of international relations, highlighting its economic strength, derived from natural gas and oil, as well as its strategic diplomatic initiatives. Professor Alam explained how Qatar has successfully positioned itself as a mediator in regional conflicts, cultivating diplomatic ties with a broad range of actors, including Western powers and its neighbours.

1.1 He suggested that India could draw lessons from Qatar's approach by developing more flexible and adaptive strategies in its foreign policy. By strengthening its diplomatic presence and forming alliances grounded in shared objectives, he argued that India could better navigate regional challenges and enhance its role in global affairs. He emphasized the importance of resource management and proactive diplomacy in ensuring national stability and fostering regional cooperation, offering a framework for how smaller states can leverage their strategic assets to influence broader geopolitical dynamics.



**3.28** Amb Khaydarov, Director, Diplomatic Academy, UWED, Tashkent, highlighted the strategic benefits Uzbekistan offers in education and energy sectors, particularly in oil and gas. He spoke about Uzbekistan's commitment to fostering educational partnerships with India, noting that the country's universities are increasingly open to international collaborations.

These partnerships provide Indian students with access to quality education in fields like engineering, medicine and technology at affordable rates, creating valuable opportunities for skill development and cultural exchange. On the energy front, he emphasized Uzbekistan's rich reserves of oil and natural gas, which hold significant potential for collaboration.

He explained that Uzbekistan is actively investing in energy infrastructure and is open to partnerships with Indian companies to expand its oil and gas sector. Such collaborations could enhance India's energy security while allowing Uzbekistan to diversify its export markets. He concluded by saying that these initiatives in education and energy not only strengthen economic ties but also promote a deeper diplomatic relationship between the two nations.

