

**Speech by H.E. Mr. Harsh Kumar Jain, Ambassador of India in  
Kazakhstan on occasion of Republic Day of India on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2015 in  
Astana, Radisson Hotel.**

Your Excellency Mr. Vladimir Shkolnik, Minister of Energy of the Republic of Kazakhstan and the Chief Guest today,

Excellencies, distinguished guests, ladies & gentleman

I am delighted to welcome you all on the occasion of the 66th Republic Day of India. This is the historic day on which the Constitution of India came into effect in 1950, securing justice, liberty and equality to all its citizens, by giving them the right to socio-economic and political justice, right to freedom of thought, expression, belief and faith, and right to equality of opportunity and status. We are proud that these values enshrined in our constitution have served us well in the last 65 years and would continue to guide us in the future.

National Days are annual milestones in a Nation's journey. Over the years, India has made great strides in ensuring the economic and social wellbeing of its people and contributed to global peace, security & prosperity. Among the major events in 2014, the one which stands out most is the holding of general elections for the lower house of Indian parliament. A total of 553 million people cast their votes making a new record in the history of democracy. The National Democratic Alliance led by the Bharatiya Janata Party, won a sweeping victory and formed new government under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. It is the first time in the last thirty years that a single party won enough seats to govern the country without support of other parties.

India created another history by becoming first country to put a spacecraft, Mangalyan, in the Mars orbit, in its maiden attempt. Another technological feat was

achieved by India when Unit 5 of the Rajasthan Atomic Power Station became the longest running nuclear reactor in the world in the last 20 years. The reactor is based on India's indigenously developed Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor technology

India's nominal GDP crossed the US\$ 2 trillion mark in 2014. According to World Bank report on global economic prospects released this month, India registered a real growth of 5.6% in 2014, and is forecasted to grow at the rate of 6.4% in 2015 and 7% each in 2016 and 2017. The positive economic outlook is based on a series of economic reforms initiated by the new government coupled with a national programme, Make in India, launched in September 2014. Make in India programme is aimed to attract business from around the world to invest and manufacture in India with strong emphasis on fostering innovation, infrastructure creation, industrial development and promotion of tourism.

India, this year, is celebrating 50 years of Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme or ITEC in short. The Programme constitutes one of the fundamental pillars of India's foreign policy. Over 140 countries and ten multilateral organisations are India's partners in the programme. Kazakhstan has been our ITEC partner since 1992. I am glad to note that over nine hundred civilian and defence personnel from Kazakhstan have benefitted under the programme in the last 23 years.

The new government led by Shri Narendra Modi has given a place of special significance to our foreign policy and diplomatic out-reach- revitalizing traditional ties, re-setting strategic relations and reaching out to Indian diaspora abroad. In keeping with the government's diplomatic priority of "neighbourhood first", the Prime Minister took an unprecedented step of inviting leaders of all SAARC countries and Mauritius for oath taking ceremony in May 2014. In the last few months, Prime Minister Modi has travelled to Bhutan, Nepal, Japan, Australia,

United States, Brazil, Myanmar and Fiji revitalizing our relations with these countries. India hosted visits of Presidents of Bangladesh, China and Russian Federation and Prime Ministers of Australia and Vietnam. President of India visited Vietnam, Norway and Finland. In another unprecedented move, India invited US President Barack Obama to be the Chief Guest at the Republic Day celebrations, which marks a new chapter in India- US relations. We are indeed greatly honoured by President Obama's presence in Delhi today.

At the initiative of PM Modi, United Nations on December 11, 2014 adopted a resolution by consensus to declare 21<sup>st</sup> June as "International Yoga day". It is a matter of great honour that this ancient Indian practice has been globally recognized. We intend to celebrate the first International Yoga Day in a big way. I request you to note the date in your respective calendars.

The relationship between India and Kazakhstan goes past many centuries. Mirza Muhammad Haidar Dughlat Beg, the author of historical work, Tarikh-i-Rashidi, which describes the founding of Kazakh Khanate in 1465, lived and is buried in India. We are glad that Kazakhstan, in recent years, has made impressive socio-economic progress and contribution to global peace and stability.

India and Kazakhstan share close and friendly relations, which have been growing steadily and were upgraded to the level of strategic partnership during the landmark visit of President Nazarbayev to India as the chief guest on the occasion of the 60<sup>th</sup> Republic Day of India in January 2009.

Kazakhstan is our largest trade and economic partner in Central Asia. We achieved a significant milestone in 2014 with our bilateral trade crossing US \$ 1 billion. The inauguration of Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway link last month

is a major breakthrough in connectivity that will open new possibilities of further expansion of trade and economic ties between India and Kazakhstan.

Among the other highlights of bilateral relations in 2014, the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Inter-Governmental Commission was successfully held in Astana in April 2014, India's Commerce Secretary HE Shri Rajiv Kher led a business delegation to Kazakhstan in March 2014, the Chief of General Staff of Kazakhstan Colonel General Saken Zhasuzakov visited India in December 2014 and India's Minister of State for External Affairs, HE Dr. V K Singh visited Astana to participate in the 13<sup>th</sup> SCO Heads of Government meeting. We are confident in further widening and deepening these relations in 2015.

I conclude by thanking you all and specially H.E. Mr. Shkolnik for joining us in our celebration. As we have just begun our journey of 2015, let me also wish you all and the people of Kazakhstan a very happy and successful year ahead. I regret that in keeping with the prohibition of alcohol on India's national days, we are unable to serve you alcoholic drinks, but I am sure that the taste of Indian cuisine will make up for the absence of alcohol.

Thank you.