



Ambassador Dr Ausaf Sayeed's Message

On 71st Republic Day of India

Riyadh, 26th January 2020

On the joyous occasion of the 71st Republic Day of India, I would like to extend my warm greetings and felicitations to all Indian citizens and Persons of Indian Origin in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Republic Day is of special significance to every Indian living anywhere in the world. It was on 26th January 1950, the Constitution of India came into effect which declared India as a sovereign, socialist, secular and democratic republic.

The Constitution of India provides Fundamental Rights to Indian Citizens and assures them of justice, equality, and liberty and endeavours to promote fraternity among them. It does not discriminate against anyone based on religion, caste, creed, sex, language or any other ground.

The Republic Day is also the day when India's first President Dr. Rajendra Prasad was sworn in as the Constitutional Head of the country replacing the Governor-General appointed by the British monarchy. It was after two and half years after India gained its Independence on August 15, 1947, that it transited into one of the biggest democracies in the world, fulfilling the dreams of Mahatma Gandhi and thousands of freedom fighters who had shed their sweat and blood to secure freedom for our country.

Thus, the idea of India as an open, plural democracy that supports a multi-religious, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and secular society came up. Underneath this diversity lies the continuity of the Indian civilization and its social fabric from the earliest times until the present.

The idea of India as an “epitome of the world” has been fascinating people from the ancient times. Numerous inspiring accounts were left by world travellers like Fahien, Hiuen Tsang, Ibn Batuta, Alberuni, Ferishta, Vasco da Gama, Marco Polo, and several others after visiting India. While the renowned American philosopher Will Durant described India as “the motherland of our race, and Sanskrit the mother of Europe's languages”, the German Indologist Max Muller described India as “the country most richly endowed with all the wealth, power and beauty that nature can bestow.”

India’s commitment to transparency and market principles in its economic decisions and its steadfast will to keep its economy open and share its resources and markets with its global partners, including the Gulf Countries, makes India a favoured economic partner for countries across the globe.

The numerous measures that have been undertaken by the Government of India towards ease of doing business including slashing of corporate tax rates, increasing foreign direct investment limits in a range of sectors and cutting red tape in decision making have *inter alia* resulted in India climbing to the 63rd spot in the World Bank’s rankings for Ease of Doing Business during 2020.

In addition, India has made a significant progress to achieve 52nd rank in WIPO’s Global Innovation Index (GII) 2019 and 54th rank in Bloomberg Innovation Index 2020 which implies that the culture of innovation is taking a centre-stage.

India’s Foreign Exchange reserves rose by \$64 billion in 2019 to touch a record \$457.5 billion. India is self-sufficient in foodgrains with an output of nearly 284 MT last year. This year we expect to grow more food and take the total output to 291 million tonnes, including 116 MT of rice and 100 MT of wheat.

Despite a slight slump in India’s economy last year, the future looks promising. The IMF has projected that India’s GDP would grow at the rate of 5.8% in 2020 and rise to 6.5% by 2021, keeping India on course for a \$5 trillion economy by 2024-25.

On the Foreign Policy front India advocates a democratic and rules-based international order that emphasizes the equality of all nations, irrespective of size, population and military might. India is in favour of comprehensive reforms of the UN Security Council and its expansion to make it more representative, effective and responsive to the geopolitical realities of the 21st century.

India's deep commitment to the Indo-Pacific region based on our vision of SAGAR — Security and Growth for All in the Region and its consultative and law-abiding approach on matters of global importance is widely recognised and appreciated. India continues to have

comprehensive cooperation with the GCC, IORA, ASEAN and the African countries among others.

India's bilateral relations with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in the modern context date back to 1947 when diplomatic relations were established between the two countries immediately after India gained its Independence. The bilateral relationship has since evolved progressively into a multi-faceted and mutually beneficial strategic partnership

The signing of the agreement to form the 'Strategic Partnership Council' between the two countries during the official visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Kingdom in October 2019 marks a new era in the Indo-Saudi bilateral relations.

The top leadership of both countries is keen to strengthen and expand the entire gamut of bilateral relations spanning through diverse fields such as trade, investments & economic cooperation, infrastructure, security & defence cooperation, energy security, food security, healthcare, entertainment, civil aviation, tourism, and culture, besides people-to-people engagement.

India has a robust trade and economic engagement with the Kingdom, which is India's fourth-largest trading partner with a bilateral trade of US\$ 34 billion, which includes a non-oil component of US\$ 10 billion. Several prestigious Indian companies are operating in the Kingdom and are participating in the development process underway in the country under its Vision 2030 programme.

Saudi Arabia plays a significant role in ensuring India's energy security by meeting its long-term energy requirements, catering to 18% of its crude oil and 30% of its LPG needs. The Kingdom plans to increase its footprint in India's downstream sector through key partnerships and by participating in India's Strategic Petroleum Reserves programme. There is keen desire in both countries to transform bilateral cooperation in the hydrocarbons sector into a larger strategic partnership based on mutual complementarities and interdependence.

On its part, India is keen to contribute to the food security requirements of the Kingdom. Numerous initiatives are being explored in the fields of agriculture and food technologies. Greater collaboration in the areas of education, Knowledge-based Industries, innovative technologies, and capacity building is also on the anvil.

India has assured its full support to the Kingdom to make its G20 Presidency a resounding success. Nearly 140 delegations from India, including several cabinet ministers, are expected to visit the Kingdom this year and engage with their Saudi and other international counterparts on a range of issues such as finance, infrastructure, health care, climate change, energy sustainability, and food security.

I would be failing in my duty if I do not acknowledge the enormous contribution made by the Indian professionals and skilled workforce to the economic development of the Kingdom and for promoting greater understanding between the people of the two countries.

I would like to avail of this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude to the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques His Majesty King Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud and HRH Crown Prince Muhammad Bin Salman for their strong support in elevating the bilateral relations between our countries into a strategic partnership and for ensuring the well-being of 2.6 million Indian nationals resident in the Kingdom.

Long live India-Saudi Relationship!

Jai Hind!
