

Speech by The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee at the banquet in honour of The President of The Ukraine, H.E. Mr. Viktor Yanukovich

Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi : 10.12.2012

Your Excellency, President Viktor Yanukovich,

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to extend a very warm and cordial welcome to Your Excellency and the distinguished members of your delegation on your State Visit to India.

India and Ukraine share a tradition of friendship, co-operation and mutually beneficial people-to-people contacts. The fruitful partnership between our Governments is now broad, multi-dimensional and comprehensive in its scope. As we celebrate, this year, the twentieth anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations, there is reason to be satisfied with our joint initiatives and our achievements.

Mr. President, India attaches great importance to its relations with Ukraine. Your visit is an occasion to take stock and set our agenda for the coming years. Both our countries are presently consolidating the gains that we have made since achieving independence and we both look forward to sustained economic growth in our respective countries and stability in our respective regions in the years to come.

The joint statement issued by our Governments today and the agreements that have been concluded will further enhance our successful partnership in diverse fields and enable us to explore new vistas of co-operation. In our exchange of views and official talks we have agreed that there is a large potential for further expanding our multifaceted cooperation. We do look forward to a productive partnership between our two Governments - that will bring more progress and prosperity to our peoples.

Your Excellency we welcome Ukraine's interest in India. We share your desire to intensify the collaborations between our business, industry, defence, space, civil nuclear energy, communications, information technology and other sectors. Fertilisers and pharmaceuticals are important areas of our economic engagement. The Indian pharmaceutical industry has been playing a positive role in the health sector of Ukraine by providing quality and cost-effective drugs. We would stress that it would be in our interest to facilitate travel - of businessmen, tourists, students and professionals - between India and Ukraine. Connectivity and interactions between our peoples will facilitate the desired intensification of our co-operation in the identified sectors.

It is a matter of satisfaction that our bilateral trade has more than doubled in the past five years. We now have a bilateral trade of USD 2.8 billion. This is a satisfactory augmentation but we must take it to its true potential.

Your Excellency, terrorism has emerged as one of the biggest threats to international peace and security. To defeat this menace, the global community must take concerted action against terrorists and their sponsors. We are deeply appreciative of Ukraine's condemnation of the terrorist attacks in India, including at the time of the terrorist attack in Mumbai in 2008. I am confident that India and Ukraine can contribute to the global efforts in combating terror.

The people of India have deep regard for the people of Ukraine and their remarkable spirit and resilience. They have overcome many challenging and difficult moments in their history to make Ukraine what it is today - a vibrant economy that is on a very positive path of progress.

They are also full of admiration for the depth of knowledge about Indian art and culture that the people of Ukraine have developed over the years. These bonds between our people have given strength and warmth to our relationship and must be nurtured and allowed to blossom. Our Governments can ensure this by facilitating greater cultural and educational contacts between the diverse societies in both our countries. I have no doubt that this will further enhance the quality of our relationship and strengthen our ties.

The twentieth year of your independence has showcased your nation's impressive accomplishments in many fields including your sporting accomplishments in the London Olympics and the successful hosting of the Euro 2012 football championship. Please accept my congratulations on these proud achievements of the people of Ukraine.

We are delighted that Ukraine will be celebrating the two hundredth anniversary of its great son, Taras Shevchenko in 2014. This brings to us memories of our own celebrations in Ukraine of the 150th Anniversary of India's first Nobel Laureate, the great poet Rabindranath Tagore. We hope to join you in your celebrations by bringing "Days of Indian Culture" to Ukraine in 2014. Before this, we look forward to celebrating the "Days of Ukrainian Culture in India" in 2013. That will be an occasion for the mighty Dnieper's vibrations to mingle with the holy spirituality of the river Ganga.

I am confident that your visit will give an impetus to the efforts of our respective Ministries to engage, take new initiatives and enhance bilateral co-operation.

May I now request all the distinguished guests to join me in raising a toast:-

- to the good health and happiness of His Excellency Mr. Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine;

- to the well-being and prosperity of the people of Ukraine-; and

- the abiding friendship and co-operation between India and Ukraine.

