

**Speech of Ambassador at Reception on the occasion of the
67th Republic Day of India, 28 January 2016 at Hotel Intercontinental, Almaty**

Your Excellency Mr. Rymtai Karibzhanov, Deputy Head of the Representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Kazakhstan at Almaty, distinguished guests, ladies & gentlemen.

It gives me an immense pleasure to welcome you all on the occasion of the celebration of 67th Republic Day of India in Astana.

This is the historic day on which the Indian Constitution came into force in 1950. The Indian Constitution is the longest written constitution in the world. It provides comprehensive and dynamic framework to guide and govern the country. This year's Republic day has a special significance since India is celebrating the 125th birth anniversary of Bharat Ratna Dr. B. R Ambedkar, who was the Principal architect of India's Constitution.

India's Constitution laid the vision of building a new India by declaring India to be a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic committed to secure justice, liberty, equality and fraternity to all its citizens. We are proud that these values have served us well and would continue to guide us in the future.

Over the last 66 years, India has made great strides in ensuring the economic and social wellbeing of its people and contributed to the global peace, security and prosperity. Our economic growth has been steady, India today is the third largest economy by purchasing power parity and seventh largest economy by nominal GDP, our currency has remained stable, and we have made rapid progress in various scientific fields from agriculture to space and information technology.

The last one year has been particularly remarkable for India for many reasons. Following Prime Minister Modi's landmark initiative "Make in India", to promote India as a global manufacturing hub, the country has scored several "firsts". To cite a few examples: India is now 1st amongst the world's most attractive investment destinations; it is 1st amongst world's fastest growing economies and; 1st among 100 countries on the growth, innovation, and leadership index.

Brand India emerged as the 7th most valued national brand in the world. India's rank jumped 12 positions in World Bank's Ease of Doing Business and 16 places in the Global Competitiveness Index.

In contrast to other major developing countries, growth in India remained robust at 7.3% in 2015. The World Bank Global Economic Prospects Report released this month forecasts India's growth at 7.8% in 2016 and 7.9% each in 2017 & 18. Moody's

ratings revised India's sovereign rating outlook to "positive" from "stable". In the present era of global economic upheaval, this is an astounding achievement.

Launch of other innovative schemes like "Start Up India", "Digital India", "Smart Cities" and "Skill India", together with administrative reforms and simplification of procedures, would further improve business sentiment.

The year 2015 also held a special significance for India-Kazakhstan bilateral relations. Indian Prime Minister Mr. Narendra Modi visited Kazakhstan in July. The visit served to further strengthen bilateral relations and expand strategic partnership between the two countries. Several high-level engagements preceded the Prime Minister's visit including the 12th meeting of the Inter-Governmental Commission, the 6th round of Foreign Office Consultations and the 4th meeting of the Joint Working Group on Military Technical Cooperation. We look forward to working closely with Kazakhstan to further deepen and strengthen our bilateral cooperation.

Almaty continues to play a very important role in our trade, economic, tourism, cultural, academic and defence cooperation. I am glad to inform you that a resident of Almaty, Ms. Akmaral Kainzarova was awarded the title of the Honoured Worker of Kazakhstan for promotion of cross cultural awareness and friendship among the people of two countries through promotion of Indian classical dance in Kazakhstan. You will see a performance by her in a short while. My heartiest congratulations to her.

With this, I come to the conclusion of my speech. I thank you all and specially H.E. Mr. Rymtai Karibzhanov for joining us in today's celebration. As we have just begun the journey of 2016, I take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy and successful year. I congratulate all people of Kazakhstan on the 25th anniversary of Kazakhstan's independence this year.

We have attempted to lay down an assortment of Indian cuisine for you. Hope you will like it. I wish you a pleasant evening.

Thank you.