

Republic Day Speech EOI Astana–
26 January 2023

Your Excellency, Mr Kanat Tumysh, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Kazakhstan, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen !

1. It is a great honour and pleasure to welcome you all, to this celebration of the 74th Republic Day of India. This day marks the adoption of the Indian Constitution in 1950.

2. India has several reasons to reflect upon the 75-year journey of our Republic with satisfaction. Newly independent India conducted its largest election the world had ever seen. Democracy took deeper roots and flourished, nurturing strong bonds among a population of epic diversity. Strong democratic institutions, including grassroots governance, a widely respected electoral body, the rule of law, vigorous media, and a vibrant civil society have contributed to what India is today. Democracy has ensured that every region of India and every group is represented, across the spectrum and at the highest levels of office. Women have been elected as Prime Minister, President, Speaker of the Indian parliament and chief ministers of Indian states.

3. India's growth trajectory has been impressive, from agricultural production to space technology, from affordable health care to world-class educational institutions, from Ayurveda to biotechnology, from giant steel plants to becoming an IT power and having the third-largest start-up ecosystem in the world, with more than 100 'unicorn' organizations as of now. In these 75 years of independence, India has seen a 100-fold increase in its GDP, placing it third in the world in terms of purchasing power parity, and one of the largest growing economies.

4. The India of 2023 is taking confident strides towards Atma Nirbharta or Self-Reliance. India has a strong network of scientific

and technological institutions and the third-largest pool of scientific and technical manpower in the world. Further, the 'Digital India' programme launched in 2015 aims to transform India into a digitally empowered society and a knowledge economy. Last year itself, over 40 per cent of the world's real-time payment transactions took place through the Indian digital payment platform – the Unified Payment Interface. Indian technical and corporate expertise is respected and acknowledged in the world, as can be seen from the Indian-origin CEOs of major technology giants like Microsoft, Google, IBM and Adobe. India operates one of the most advanced, cost-effective and socially relevant space programmes in the world, while readily sharing knowledge with partner agencies worldwide.

5. Indian Foreign Policy is human-centric and based on the firm belief in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam or “the World is one Family”. The most obvious manifestation of this was India's «Vaccine Maitri» program, under which 200 million doses of vaccine were exported and provided as an aid to more than 100 countries. At the same time, we deeply appreciate the support extended to us by the international community during the second COVID wave, including from Kazakhstan. India takes up the G-20 and SCO presidency with an awareness of the myriad problems facing the world and hopes to build consensus on the most relevant issues of our time. The motto of this year's G20, 'One Earth, One Family, One Future' reflects this endeavour.

Excellencies, ladies & gentlemen !

6. Kazakhstan recently celebrated 30 years of independence. For Kazakhstan, these years have been most significant, transformational and momentous. The people of Kazakhstan can justifiably look back with enormous pride and satisfaction at the rapid strides the country has made. Not only has it been able to preserve peace, security and stability in the country, it has emerged as a significant economic and political actor in the international arena.

7. Relations between India and Kazakhstan are ancient, going back more than 2000 years. There has been a constant and regular exchange of ideas, intellect, and cultural influences. The spread of Buddhism from India to Kazakhstan and Sufi beliefs from Kazakhstan to India are two such examples.

8. In the present era, relations between India and Kazakhstan continue to exhibit dynamism and momentum. The relationship was upgraded to the level of a Strategic Partnership in 2009. Regular exchange of visits at all levels from both sides and our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's visits to Kazakhstan, in 2015 and 2017, have contributed to the development of multi-faceted cooperation in all areas of bilateral and multilateral relations. We are also partners in many international fora such as the United Nations, SCO and CICA. Kazakhstan is India's largest trade partner in Central Asia. We enjoy close cooperation in many defence and civilian fields. The service of Kazakhstan Armed Forces troops as part of the Indian Battalion, in the UN Mission in Lebanon, is a unique and cherished form of partnership between our two countries. Cultural relations and capacity-building initiatives have cemented a close people-to-people bond. Under India's developmental assistance program, ITEC and ICCR scholarships are provided to Kazakh citizens, based on their priorities, in a large spectrum of fields. I am happy to inform you that over 1300 Kazakh nationals have availed ITEC facility and over 200 have availed ICCR scholarship.

9. 2022 was an excellent year in the context of our bilateral relations. Prime Minister Modi hosted the first India-Central Asia Summit in virtual format in January 2022, which was attended by H.E. President Tokayev, along with other Central Asian Heads of State. This was followed by several Ministerial visits and notable interactions in the fields of economics, trade and security. I am also happy to share with you that Mahatma Gandhi's first life-sized statue in Astana was unveiled last year in October. The bust of Great

Kazakh poet & philosopher Abai was also inaugurated last year in June in New Delhi.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen !

10. We hope, that 2023 will be more fruitful and significant for every sector in our bilateral relations and our ties will grow from strength to strength. This year began on a high note as H.E. President Tokayev attended the «Voice of the Global South Summit» organized by India and chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The two leaders highlighted the issues of global concerns.

Excellencies, ladies & gentlemen !

11. Let me take this opportunity to thank the Government of Kazakhstan, the Foreign Office, line Ministries and agencies for cooperating and contributing to elevate our bilateral relationship.

12. I also thank the Indian diaspora for taking Indian culture far from our motherland and contributing to the growth and development in the land of their work.

Thank you.
