

Speech by The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee at The Banquet In Honour of The President of The Republic of Tajikistan H.e. Mr. Emomali Rahmon

Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi : 03.09.2012

Your Excellency, President Rahmon

I extend a most cordial welcome to you and your distinguished delegation. We are indeed happy to have you amongst us once again. You are an old friend of India.

Your Excellency,

For centuries, the people of India and Tajikistan have shared ideas, knowledge, art and literature. A strong relationship has existed, from pre-historic times, between India and Central Asia, and in particular, the Tajik people.

We have been part of the same Kushan Empire in the 1st Century A.D., which encompassed tracts of Northern India and stretched to the Pamir region and beyond. It is also known that tribes like the Sakas moved from the Central Asian region and were assimilated into Indian society.

Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and later Islam, have connected India and Tajikistan centuries ago. The works of Jalaluddin Rumi, Amir Khusro Dehlavi, and the compositions of the great Mirza Abdul Qadir Bedil, are a testimony to our long standing ties. The works of literary giants like Ayini and Rudaki reflect the cultural synthesis in this part of the world. This is also revealed in Your Excellency's own chronicle, "Tajikistan in the mirror of history".

Excellency,

With such a rich past, it is our duty to build a glorious future together. I am confident that the talks and discussions that have taken place today will lead to enhanced co-operation for the mutual benefit of both our peoples.

We live in a region beset with many challenges posed by extremist and fundamentalist forces. The menace of terrorism is a common threat. No faith supports such means. No politics can justify it. India and Tajikistan can do much to combat terrorism. As secular countries, it is essential for us to preserve the secular values of our societies and ensure their safety and security. Our Government looks forward to working with Tajikistan to meet these challenges.

Excellency,

Our common goals seek to ensure the progress and development of our peoples. The potential of our bilateral co-operation has no limit. We need to work together to overcome the adverse effects, on our economies, of the global economic slowdown. Let us collaborate in industries,

trade, renewable energy, tourism, culture, and let us support each other in technology, education, and in the capacity building of our peoples. I am sure that the agreements signed today will prove to be an important milestone in this direction.

While we take our relationship to a higher level of a strategic partnership, let us also enhance our co-operation in pursuing our common goals in international fora.

In all our efforts, peace and stability of the region must be accorded the foremost importance. The independence and progress towards prosperity of Afghanistan is key to peace and stability in South Asia and Central Asia.

I am confident that in the years to come, relations between our two countries will grow even stronger and closer; just as it should be between two brotherly nations.

The people of Tajikistan will celebrate Independence Day on 9 September. We have recently celebrated the 20th Anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Tajikistan. I take this opportunity to convey to Your Excellency and through you, to the people of Tajikistan, warm felicitations and best wishes of the people of India for their continued progress and prosperity.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I invite you to join me in proposing a toast:-

- to the health and success of His Excellency, President Rahmon;
- peace, stability, progress and prosperity of the people of Tajikistan ; and
- to the enduring friendship between India and Tajikistan.