

Speech by The President Of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee at The Banquet in honour of The President of The Federal Republic Of Germany, H.E. Mr Joachim Gauck

Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi : 05.02.2014

Your Excellency,

President Joachim Gauck,

President of the Federal Republic of Germany,

Madame Daniela Schadt,

Shri Mohammed Hamid Ansari, H'ble Vice President of India,

Dr. Manmohan Singh, H'ble Prime Minister of India,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome Your Excellency and Madame Daniela Schadt - and the distinguished members of your delegation on your first State Visit to India. We see your visit as yet another occasion for Germany and India to reinforce our long standing ties of friendship and co-operation.

Excellency, our diplomatic relations began more than 60 years ago in the era when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru was building the foundations of modern India. It has today evolved into a "Strategic Partnership". This is but a culmination of our two nations' continuous commitment, over the decades, to realise the full potential of our mutually beneficial relationship. Today, our Governments are working closely on joint initiatives in a number of areas to achieve our common objectives. We are consulting frankly on regional and international issues. Our shared values impart both depth and vision to our efforts for achieving the aspirations of our respective peoples - and for global progress and prosperity. We value our regular dialogue on the vital issues related to world trade and financial stability, climate change and sustainable development. We are both committed to the reform of the United Nations and the multilateral institutions so that they reflect the current global realities and are able to effectively deal with the challenges of our times.

Indeed, our bilateral relationship is built on time-tested foundations of mutual respect and understanding. The intellectual exchanges, over the centuries, between our philosophers, academics and literary personalities have contributed to this. German Philosophers like Kant and Hegel played an important role in introducing Indian philosophy to Europe in the 19th century.

Rabindranath Tagore and Albert Einstein cherished their discussions and deeply influenced each other. In the early 19th Century, the University of Bonn had already established a Department of Indology. Our interest in each other is also manifested in the popularity of yoga, ayurveda, Indian classical dance and music - and even "Bollywood" films - in Germany.

Excellency, our traditional contacts in trade and commerce date back to 1505 when merchants from Augsburg sailed to the shores of Goa. In more recent times, Germany has played a key role in India's modernisation and development. The laying of the first telegraph line between London and Kolkata by Siemens in the 1860s was a transformational event. The Rourkela Steel Plant, constructed by Krupp and Demag, the spark plug manufacturing plant established by Bosch in Bangalore, the paint factories of Bayer, the collaboration of Daimler-Benz with Tata Motors, and the Indian Institute of Technology in Chennai are amongst the many successes of Indo-German collaboration.

Excellency, such is the confidence between our business and industry that Indian companies are increasingly venturing into investments and acquisitions in Germany, and we, in turn, see immense opportunities for enhanced German investment in our country's physical infrastructure. We also look forward to the participation of the small and medium enterprises of Germany in India's growing consumer market.

Today, not only do we celebrate Germany as our largest trading partner in Europe, but we also attach great importance to German development assistance which has helped to bring advanced technology into India and to enhance India's energy efficiency while developing alternative sources of renewable energy.

Excellency, as you are aware, even though the global economy has yet to recover from a particularly difficult downturn, the Indian economy, fortunately, has managed to remain on a positive trajectory. We have undertaken important reforms to address the economic challenges that have come up and are confident of reverting to a robust pace of growth. I am confident that businessmen, academicians, scientists and researchers in both our countries will be successful in identifying areas for further collaboration and ever higher levels of success.

Our two countries are bastions of democracy and freedom. We have a shared respect for the rights of individuals, rule of law and a free media. I take this opportunity to congratulate you for your personal commitment and your contribution to the promotion of democracy and human rights.

Excellency, I am confident that your visit will be an important milestone in our strategic partnership and will set the agenda for our joint endeavours in the coming days.

With these words, I once again welcome you and wish you a very pleasant stay in India.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I request you to join me in raising a toast -

- to the good health of His Excellency, President Joachim Gauck,

- to the continued progress and prosperity of the German people and
- to closer friendship and cooperation between India and the Federal Republic of Germany.