

## **Banquet speech by The President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee in honour of His Majesty Juan Carlos I, King of Spain**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi : 26.10.2012

His Majesty, King Juan Carlos I of Spain,

Distinguished Guests from Spain,

Ladies and gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to His Majesty, King Juan Carlos on his second State Visit to India.

Your Majesty, King Juan Carlos, you are a long standing friend of India. Under your stewardship, your Government has remained committed to building a strong and enduring relationship with India. We have, together, taken steady steps to build and expand our linkages and bonds of trade, tourism and investments. These have been based on a strong foundation of well established people to people contacts developed over the centuries. Had Captain Christopher Columbus discovered the route to India instead of America, perhaps the history of our relationship may, too, have taken quite a different course.

Your Majesty's presence here today is an important milestone. Your visit is taking place 30 years after your last State Visit to India - in January 1982, when you were Chief Guest at our Republic Day celebrations.

Much has changed since - not only in both our countries but in all parts of the world. The international scenario has transformed itself through the dramatic political developments that have taken place; our world has shrunk significantly through the IT and telecommunications revolution and globalization has permanently altered the way we do things.

Having presided over a remarkable transition to parliamentary monarchy in Spain, you have remained the symbol of the unity and permanence of the Spanish State. You have safeguarded the institution of the Parliament and preserved democracy in your country. You have strongly repudiated attempts to unsettle the democratic processes and institutions outlined by your Constitution and ratified by the Spanish people. Under your leadership, Spain has come to be recognized as an outstanding example of a democracy organized in the form of a parliamentary government under a constitutional monarchy.

India and Spain, as democratic and open societies, have a number of synergies. We have successfully taken advantage of these to our mutual benefit. Our peoples have been fortunate partners and our Governments have a shared interest in the success of their initiatives and joint ventures in every sector. We both recognize the need to preserve the gains of globalization and to work bilaterally and multilaterally to shape a new global agenda for inclusive and sustained growth. We would like to create a path for future development that goes beyond recovery from the current crisis. Although it is natural for some Governments to resort to protectionist measures for short term gains, they are increasingly acknowledging that in the longer term, it is counter productive to erect barriers to movement of people, services, and capital. Many international financial institutions are currently facing a resource crunch. This is, therefore, the time for effective solutions and even reform of those institutions.

Democratic societies such as ours have the inherent ability to convert challenges into opportunities during difficult times. Spain's commitment to the Euro-project has sent out a strong and positive signal - as also the fact that you are taking all the necessary steps to overcome the debt crisis. In India, similarly, a number of reforms - that have been introduced recently, bear testimony to our own determination to overcome the global economic slowdown. We are committed to providing an enabling environment for business and industry to invest in India. Spain has developed cutting edge technologies and possesses expertise in diverse areas such as infrastructure, renewable energy, agriculture, water treatment, and solid waste management. These are areas of priority interest for India. We, too, have much to offer Spain in information technology, pharmaceuticals, agricultural products and other key areas of your interest - where high quality and reasonable costs make business with India all the more attractive. There is tremendous potential for further co-operation between Spain and India.

We welcome Spain's interest in India. We welcome your observation that Spain's global vocation will lead you to continue to extend and consolidate relations with "dynamic and thriving" economies such as ours. Our Government reciprocates the sentiment. We would stress that it would be in our interest to facilitate travel - of businessmen, tourists, students and professionals - between India and Spain. Connectivity - by way of direct air links - and interactions between our peoples will further boost the level of the engagement between our various sectors.

Terrorism has emerged as one of the biggest threats to international peace and security. Sadly our two countries have, repeatedly, been victims of some of its most deadly manifestations. To defeat this menace, the global community must take concerted action against terrorists and their sponsors.

If there is one man in history whose name is synonymous with peace, then it is Mahatma Gandhi, who we call "Father of our Nation". Though he never had occasion to visit Spain, I am told that his ideals and philosophy have found a permanent place in the hearts of communities across Spain.

The 150th birth anniversary of another great Indian, Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, was celebrated last year in commemorative events across the continents. We were happy to learn that a priceless collection of Tagore memorabilia owned by a collector in Galicia, Dr. Jose Paz has been donated to the Casa de la India where it will be preserved and displayed.

Your Majesty, we welcome the interest taken by the people of Spain in India's rich culture and heritage. We appreciate the contribution of Casa Asia in organising activities for cultural and educational exchanges between our societies.

I would like to recognize the role played by Casa de la India, a cultural foundation supported by both our Governments, as a platform for dialogue and mutual understanding between our peoples.

In New Delhi, the Cervantes Institute promotes Spanish culture; Indian films shot in Spain have brought the vibrancy of Spain to Indian audiences and I am told that the "Tomatina" festival has caught the imagination of many young Indians! They are avidly following Spain's impressive achievements in the field of football and share your pride at achieving the position of reigning World and European football champions. I am confident that the strong affinities and substantial potential will take the abiding friendship between our peoples to a new level.

The agreements that have been signed today will set the agenda for our work ahead. I do look forward to a mutually beneficial and productive partnership between our two Governments - that will further our growth and bring more progress and prosperity to our peoples.

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.

With these few words, I once again welcome you, Your Majesty and your distinguished delegation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I now invite you to please join me in raising a toast:

- to the good health and personal well-being of His Majesty, King Juan Carlos, King of Spain;
- to the progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Spain; and
- to lasting friendship between India and Spain.