

**INTERVIEW OF PRESIDENT PRANAB MUKHERJEE BY
CCTV BEFORE HIS FORTHCOMING VISIT TO CHINA**

(May 16, 2016)

Interviewer 1: Sir, how do you see current China-India relations and what is your agenda for the coming visit to China this time and what do you hope to achieve from this trip?

Hon. President (Shri Pranab Mukherjee): First of all, I would say that we have a very comprehensive relationship with People's Republic of China. We consider it an important relationship. Every State visit has its own significance as it provides opportunity to the leaders to share their views, explore possibilities of expanding cooperation between the countries concerned and also to exchange views on regional, global and multilateral issues.

This is my first visit to the great country, China as the President of the Republic of India. Many Presidents, including my immediate predecessor Mrs. Pratibha Patil have visited China in the past.

The relationship between China and India is comprehensive. It covers all aspects - political, security, economic, educational and cultural. I had the privilege of receiving His Excellency President Xi Jinping when he visited India in 2014. I hosted a banquet for him. He

extended an invitation to me. I am glad to have this opportunity to respond to his invitation. It is an effort to intensify our relationship.

I am confident that during this State visit, my interaction with the leaders and dialogue with various sections of the people will enhance the possibilities of cooperation. My objective is to discuss all important issues. We desire to constantly engage in dialogue to find a resolution of all outstanding issues which we consider holding us back from fully developing our potential. Keeping that objective in view, I hope my visit will provide opportunity to expand and deepen our relations in trade, commerce and investments.

We are doing well but the full potentiality is yet to be achieved. That is why we want to resolve all outstanding issues in a mutually acceptable manner, keeping in mind the aspirations, concerns, sensitivities of each country.

Interviewer 1: How do you think should the two countries cooperate together in counterterrorism as the two major powers in the region, and what kind of role do you think the SCO should play in this field?

Hon. President: This is a very important question. It is also very relevant because terrorism has emerged as the great menace and perhaps, the biggest challenge to the peace and tranquility of the world. Terrorism has no respect for any boundary. It is not confined to any

territorial limit. It spreads its venom and hatred all over the world. Therefore, to check terrorism, comprehensive efforts are needed by all countries concerned.

India has been victim of terror activities for a very long period of time. We know how menacing terrorism is. India and China are both huge countries, multicultural and multiracial. If we come together in fighting this menace, I am sure it would have its own impact. India believes that every country should always have a zero tolerance policy towards terrorism. The fight should be all-out, all comprehensive. There cannot be any qualification in fighting this menace. Terrorism in all manifestations, in all aspects, ought to be fought and for that, total cooperation amongst nations is absolutely necessary.

SCO is not exactly a new mechanism. Certain formalities are to be complied with and I feel in this year itself, India will be a full member. And naturally, like many other fora it will also provide an opportunity to expand our cooperation and help each other in fighting this menace.

Interviewer 1: President *ji*, You have always been advocating China's participation in India's Make In India initiative. And you also said that India should learn from China's experience in this area. What kind of measures India will take to boost trade relations between the two countries?

Hon. President: First of all, we must express appreciation because our economic cooperation is expanding and trade is expanding. The volume of trade is increasing every year. I hope in future it would be possible for us to enhance our economic cooperation. We have established a number of mechanisms such as the Joint Economic Commission. We have a mechanism of security dialogue at high level. We have established a mechanism for mutual consultations. Whenever we get the opportunity, we discuss with each other.

India requires investment from China in areas like infrastructure, modernization and development of railways, communication, manufacturing etc. These are fields in which investment from China is welcome. Our Make in India, Digital India, Smart Cities programme etc. will open windows for Chinese investment. And, we have the mechanisms through which these investments could be assured and there would be no risk in investment. Our trade, economic and commercial cooperation, including investments should not be confined to a couple of areas or a couple of commodities. It should be comprehensive.

In this connection, I would also like to suggest that perhaps China may have a flexible approach in respect of trade and foreign investments in sectors like pharmaceuticals and agro products where India has developed expertise and has emerged as an important global player and where there is immense requirement in China. That will

address expansion of volume of trade between the two countries as well as the current distortion we have in the trade balance. It will help both the countries to address the trade balance, if sizeable investment takes place from China to India. That is why, we always welcome investments from China.

Interviewer 1: I think the space for our two countries to cooperate is very huge.

Hon. President: We shall have to always keep in mind that we have cooperated as ancient civilizations. We are not talking of cooperation only in today's context. We have built up cooperation through centuries.

Interviewer 1: There comes my next question. China and India, as we all know, are the most ancient civilizations around the world. So, how do you think should the two countries cooperate together to their advantage? And in what other aspect do you think the two countries can cooperate?

Hon. President: Exactly. We have cooperated with each other in the most peaceful, problem-free way over the centuries. Travelers have come. We built institutions where the two civilizations met. Over the years, we traded with each other. I am taking a large number of academicians, University Vice Chancellors, Directors of NITs etc. with

me so that we can build cooperation in the field of education and culture. We want to liberalize the process of traveling to each other. If there is frequent exchanges and people-to-people contacts are established, that will provide the necessary momentum to expand and deepen our relationship.

Therefore, when these two old civilizations come together, if we walk together on the world platform, the world will notice and the world will appreciate that 2.5 billion people of these two oldest civilisational countries have come together. They are working together. That would be a remarkable thing. My objective in this visit therefore, is to have opportunity to discuss with the leadership of the People's Republic of China all aspects, share our views, exchange our views on local issues, regional issues, issues affecting the multilateral system and issues affecting the whole world. To my mind, our two civilizations coming together, working in close cooperation is a major event in contemporary history.

Interviewer 1: Yes, definitely. It is said by our President Xi Jinping that if both countries come together, work together, no one can stop us.

Hon. President: Exactly, and the whole world will have to notice that India and China have come together.

I would, in this connection, take the opportunity of conveying my best wishes to all your viewers and through your media, to all brothers

and sisters of the great country- People's Republic of China. Thank you.

Interviewer: Thank you so much. We are looking forward to your visit.

Supplementary question from Mr. Wu Qiang of Xinhua News Agency Why did you choose Guangzhou as the first stop in your visit?

Hon. President: First of all, this is one of the most important Provinces of China where huge economic development is taking place. Secondly, over the years, we had good political contacts with the people and leadership of China in that region. Right now, large number of Indians lives in that area.

It is correct that I went to Guangzhou to open our Consulate when I was Foreign Minister. But even before that I had opportunity of visiting that beautiful city when I first visited China, not as a Minister but as the Deputy Chairman of Planning Commission on the invitation of the Planning authorities of PRC. This was sometime in 1993. At that time, I visited Guangzhou, Beijing, and Shanghai. Naturally, as President of the Republic of India, I am visiting Guangzhou for the first time. I am glad that the authorities of PRC have agreed and we are starting our visit from Guangzhou and ending it at Beijing. I am quite

confident, as I stated to your colleague during the television interview, my visit would be successful. We will not only deepen our relationship, we will expand it. It will be a truly all-comprehensive partnership between two great countries.

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