

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT AT THE BANQUET  
HOSTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF  
VIETNAM, H.E. MR. TRUONG TAN SANG**

**Hanoi, Vietnam 15 September 2014**

Your Excellency, President Truong Tan Sang,

Distinguished Guests,

I am honoured to be here. I thank you for your generous words and the kind sentiments expressed by you – which I fully reciprocate. I was profoundly touched by the warmth of the reception accorded to me and to my delegation by the Government and the people of Vietnam. My visit to Vietnam provides me an opportunity to personally convey the deep commitment of the Government and the people of India to the enduring friendship and co-operation between our two great nations.

Excellency, Vietnam is a country whose people India holds in the highest esteem. We have great admiration for the unconquerable spirit of the Vietnamese people, for their determination to succeed against all odds and their tenacity and fortitude against even the most powerful adversaries. Today, the same attributes and national character are driving your economic growth and development. These have resulted in increased prosperity and better living standards of your people.

This progress is testimony to the inspirational leadership of this country and the perseverance of its people.

Excellency, our two countries have been closely linked, over the centuries, by the mutually beneficial trade and peaceful contacts. Of these, the most enduring bond that we share is our common heritage of Buddhism. Even today, the teachings and principles of Lord Buddha are valid and relevant and are embraced by both our societies in our daily life and interactions.

We also share a history of our struggle for independence from colonial rule. In 1942, the legendary Ho Chi Minh, from his prison cell, had written to Pandit Nehru, who was then also in jail, saying that even though they had not met and were separated by a thousand miles, yet they were communicating “without words”. Sure enough, Pandit Nehru gave Ho Chi Minh his solidarity and support. He was the first foreign leader to visit the Democratic Republic of Vietnam after the liberation of Hanoi. Significantly, it was during Pandit Nehru’s visit that Ho Chi Minh made his first public appearance after returning to a free Hanoi.

The enthusiastic public welcome given to Ho Chi Minh on his visit to Delhi in 1958 and Dr. Rajendra Prasad when he visited Vietnam in

1959 reflected the great empathy and friendship between our two peoples.

I invoke the close bonds of these Founding Fathers of our nations as it is their vision and foresight that recognised the great potential of our closeness. Successive generations of our leaders have nurtured and consolidated it. Its warmth endures, and I can feel it in the hospitality extended to me today.

Excellency, our nations have now made a transition from the era of post colonial solidarity and entered a new phase of strategic engagement as natural partners. Our relations have never been better than they are today. Our Strategic Partnership has blossomed into a robust, mutually rewarding, multi-faceted relationship. Our co-operation at regional and multilateral fora constitutes one of the strong pillars of this Strategic Partnership. It has been reinforced by regular exchanges at the highest political level and the institutional mechanisms that we have created.

Today, as we emerge as two of the fastest growing economies in the world, the potential of our joint efforts to enhance our bilateral trade

and investment, our collaboration in science and technology, our co-operation in human resource development and, of course, our cultural exchanges, is infinite.

We also have a convergence of views on most regional and international issues. We are convinced that together we can promote peace, stability and security in this region and the world. As two developing countries with a stake in the future, we can and should take advantage of our many synergies.

I am confident that our dialogue and partnership will only strengthen in the years to come. The future presents us with innumerable new opportunities - and, inevitably, some challenges. In order for us to safeguard our national interests and further our shared goals of peace and prosperity, India and Vietnam must stand together.

India will always remain your reliable and all-weather friend.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Please join me in a toast:

- To the good health, happiness and success of His Excellency, Troung Tan Sang, President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam and all of you present here today;
- To the peace, prosperity and progress of the brave and friendly people of Vietnam and;

- To the everlasting bonds of friendship between India and Vietnam.

Thank you.