

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE AT
THE BANQUET IN HONOUR OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
KOREA, H.E. PARK GEUN-HYE**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi: 16-01-2014

Your Excellency, Madame Park Geun-hye,
President of the Republic of Korea,
Honourable Ministers,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome Your Excellency and your distinguished delegation to India. It is indeed a matter of satisfaction that your State Visit is taking place at a time when our countries are celebrating the fortieth year of our diplomatic relations. Our shared commitment to democracy and the rule of law - and the importance that we attach to upholding civil liberties and human rights are at the very foundation of the strategic partnership that we have today. Your visit to India within the first year of your Presidency, signals to us your commitment to take this mutually advantageous relationship to a new level of understanding and co-operation.

Your Excellency, we, in India, see the Republic of Korea as one of the most progressive nations in modern times. The industrious Korean people have been able to overcome all odds and rise from the devastation of war to realize their impressive economic potential. Today the Republic of Korea is the 4th largest economy in Asia. As a friend and partner, India wishes the people of Korea every success in their endeavors to achieve a second economic 'Miracle on the River Han'.

Since the time that an Indian princess from Ayodhya travelled to Korea and married King Kim Suro almost 2000 years ago, our peoples have built bridges and forged ties that have endured and thrived over the centuries. The philosophy of the Buddha has enriched the discourse between them. The travelogue of the respected Korean monk Hyecho gave us a valuable insight into the India of the 8th Century. Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore's prophetic poem, '*Lamp of the East*', pays tribute to Korea's glorious past and its bright future.

Excellency, our Government attaches great importance to our relations with Republic of Korea and we are glad that they have transformed in recent years to become multi-dimensional.

Today, leading Korean companies have become household names in India too. Similarly, Indian companies and banks are investing and establishing themselves with good results in the Republic of Korea. Our growing linkages are being built on the complementarities of our economies that reinforce each other. We value the presence and progress of Korean enterprises in India. We are also glad to see the recent expansion in cultural, academic and other people-to-people exchanges between our two countries.

Excellency, I am pleased to note that India and the Republic of Korea have a distinct convergence on a host of regional and international issues, including energy security, freedom and safety of navigation in international waters, non- proliferation of nuclear and missile technology and combating the scourge of terrorism, to name just a few.

India and Republic of Korea, as vibrant economies, have been duly promoting education, information technology and science. We both are determined to work for peace, stability and growth in our respective regions - and in Asia as a whole. India looks forward to intensifying our joint efforts to build on our mutual goodwill and growing synergies to further strengthen our relationship.

Your State Visit and interaction with the Government, business and industry and the people of India is yet another step in this direction. I have no doubt that the areas of decisions taken and initiatives announced today will accelerate our co-operation and add content and substance to our Strategic Partnership for the mutual benefit of our peoples.

I do hope this visit is memorable and satisfying for you and the members of your delegation and I take this opportunity to greet you and through you, the people of the Republic of Korea a very happy New Year.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you to join me in proposing a toast:

- to the health and success of Her Excellency, President Madame Park Geun-hye;
- to the progress and prosperity of the people of the Republic of Korea; and
- to the enduring friendship between India and the Republic of Korea.