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**Press Information Bureau
Government of India
President's Secretariat**

25-January-2015 22:8 IST

**Speech by the President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee at the banquet hosted in honour of the President of the
United States of America H.E. Mr. Barack Obama**

Your Excellency, President Barack Obama,

Mrs. Michelle Obama,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour and privilege to welcome you and the First Lady this evening, Mr. President. After having had the pleasure of meeting you in such a banquet four years ago during your last visit to India, I am doubly delighted to be able to receive you again - this time, as the host!

Excellency, you have made history thrice-over today by becoming the first U.S. President to grace our Republic Day celebration as the Guest of Honour; by being the first U.S. President to visit India twice while in office; and by holding a second Summit-level meeting in the shortest-ever time span of four months. These milestones make this a truly historical visit. While I am proud that we are creating history together, I am even more pleased that we are creating a brighter future together - for our two countries and the world.

The relationship between India and the United States is a special one. It is special because it is a relationship forged in the hearts and minds of our two people, in the commercial ties between our two businesses, in the exchanges between our two scientists and engineers and in the enduring linkages between hundreds of our institutions. This is one relationship where the two Governments can rightfully take pride in acknowledging that they have successfully put in place a 'Strategic Partnership' simply by following the lead shown by their people!

It is this strong attraction and chemistry that explains why the people of both countries have always viewed each other as friends in every opinion poll; it also explains why the relationship has consistently enjoyed bipartisan political support. This natural sense of kinship stems from the foundational values that both our people cherish deeply – the values of individual liberty and freedom, democracy, diversity and justice. These core values not only determine how we live and how we are governed as a nation; they also define our aspirations for the future and the vision of the world we want to bequeath to our children and grandchildren.

Excellency, it is this shared vision that forms the solid bedrock of our blossoming relationship. Today, our people are collaborating in practically every sphere of human activity - from jointly plumbing the depths of the ocean to

understand the Indian monsoon, to joint space exploration in Mars – and everything that lies in between. But in a relationship like ours that has infinite potential, there is so much more that we can and should do. Excellency, I am glad, therefore, that our countries are deepening strategic, security and defence cooperation to make our two countries, the region and the world a safer place; the United States in partnering us in our ambitious economic and development agenda through infrastructure development, clean energy solutions, investment, technology, leveraging information technology, education and skilling; your people are also working with us in setting up Smart Cities, fighting diseases and improving water, health and sanitation.

Your presence at our cherished Republic Day Parade tomorrow will demonstrate to the world, the growing ties of friendship and trust that bind our two democracies closely. As we create new milestones in history and chart new destination points in our shared journey into the future, your visit, Mr President, symbolizes both history and future in the making.

Excellencies and Distinguished Guests, may I now request you to join me in raising a toast to:

- The good health of His Excellency President Obama and Her Excellency Mrs. Michelle Obama;
- To the continued prosperity and well being of the United States; and
- To creating new milestones that further strengthen the bonds of friendship and cooperation between India and the United States.

DS/SH