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Prime Minister's Media Statement in Beijing during his visit to China (May 15, 2015)

May 15, 2015

Excellency, Li Keqiang,
Members of the Press,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by expressing my deep gratitude to President Xi, Premier Li and the people of China for the exceptional welcome and hospitality.

I am very grateful to President Xi for his special gesture of hosting me in Xian; and, for showing me the city's extraordinary heritage. It is a treasure of the world.

Xian is also a symbol of our ancient spiritual and cultural links. I have a personal connection with Xian through Monk Xuan Zang. He visited my hometown 1400 years ago.

I am pleased to visit China in the first year of my Government. This is one of our most important strategic partnerships.

The reason is obvious. The re-emergence of India and China and their relationship will have a profound impact on the two countries and the course of this century.

Our relationship has been complex in recent decades.

But, we have a historic responsibility to turn this relationship into a source of strength for each other and a force of good for the world.

We are committed to set a new direction between the two largest Asian countries.

I believe that my discussions with President Xi and Premier Li have advanced our relationship in that direction.

Our conversations were candid, constructive and friendly. We covered all issues, including those that trouble smooth development of our relations.

I stressed the need for China to reconsider its approach on some of the issues that hold us back from

realizing full potential of our partnership. I suggested that China should take a strategic and long term view of our relations. I found the Chinese leadership responsive.

On the boundary question, we agreed that we continue to explore a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable resolution. We both reiterated our strong commitment to make all efforts to maintain peace and tranquility in the border region.

I found sensitivity to our concerns on this issue; and, interest in further intensifying confidence building measures. I also reiterated the importance of clarification of Line of Actual Control in this regard.

I sought tangible progress on issues relating to visa policy and trans-border rivers. I also discussed some of our regional concerns.

We agreed that as we move ahead, we should be sensitive to each other's interests; strengthen mutual trust and confidence; continue to manage our difference with maturity; and, seek solutions to outstanding issues..

Our decision to enhance strategic communication and coordination on our region is especially significant.

Bilateral cooperation was a very important part of our discussion. We have set a high level of ambition for our economic partnership. We see enormous bilateral opportunities and many similar challenges, like urbanization.

We are pleased with the progress on the commitments from the Summit last September.

This includes cooperation in the Railways, where we have identified specific projects, and the two Chinese industrial parks in Gujarat and Maharashtra. I am pleased that the two chief ministers are here with me.

Both leaders were very supportive about increased Chinese participation in our Make in India mission and infrastructure sector. In Shanghai tomorrow, we will see over twenty ventures in the private sector take concrete shape.

President Xi and Premier Li were very receptive to the specific concerns I had raised on our growing trade deficit. We look forward to early impact on the ground.

An area of high priority for us is people-to-people contacts. Indians and Chinese don't know each other well, much less understand each other.

We have decided to take the relationship out of the narrow confines of governments in the national capitals to states, cities and our people.

For the first time, India has launched a State and Provincial Leaders' Forum with any country. This is consistent with my firm commitment to cooperative federalism in India.

This is the Year of India in China; the next one will be the Year of China in India. This will expand tourism between our two countries.

We are establishing a Centre for Gandhian and Indian Studies in Shanghai, a Yoga College in Kunming and a bilateral Think-Tanks Forum.

The Nathu La route for Indian pilgrims to visit Kailash Mansarovar will become operational in June. I want to thank China for that.

Our decision to open a consulates in Chengdu and Chennai reflects growing mutual confidence and shared commitment to expand our relationship.

These steps will help make our relationship more broad-based and people-centric.

Finally, we have many common global and regional interests. For example, we have a shared interest in the outcome of the international climate change negotiations. We are both trying to strengthen regional connectivity.

Terrorism is a shared threat. Instability in West Asia matters to both of us. Peace and progress in Afghanistan benefits us both. I am confident that our international partnership will deepen.

Today, we have signed over 20 agreements, covering diverse areas of cooperation. This shows the depth and maturity of our relationship and the positive direction of our partnership.

This has been a very productive and positive visit.

I look forward to working with President Xi and Premier Li. I have welcomed President Xi's proposal to hold regular summits to realize our vision for the relationship. I have also invited Premier Li to visit India at an early date.

I look forward to Shanghai tomorrow. **Thank you.**



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