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Media Statement by the President of India Upon the Conclusion of His State Visit to the People's Republic of China

Following is the full text of the statement to media by the President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee upon the conclusion of his State visit to the People's Republic of China (May 24 to 27, 2016). The statement was made on board the aircraft during the President's return to New Delhi from Beijing today (May 27, 2016):

"I have just concluded my State visit to the People's Republic of China from May 24 -27, 2016. My delegation included Shri Santosh Kumar Gangwar, Minister of State (IC) of the Ministry of Textiles, four Members of Parliament representing major political parties and different regions of India, namely, Dr. Bhushan Lal Jangde, Sh. K. C. Venugopal, Sh. Sudheer Gupta and Smt. Ranjanben Dhananjay Bhatt as well as senior officials of Rashtrapati Bhavan and MEA. An 8-member academic delegation comprising Vice Chancellors and heads of institutions of higher learning as well as a representative of MHRD also accompanied me.

I have been closely associated with the development of India-China relations for over three decades of my political life, having visited China on many occasions in various capacities. This was, however, my first visit to China as the President of the Republic of India. The visit was to reciprocate the historic visit of President Xi Jinping to India in September 2014 during which we established a Closer Developmental Partnership as an important component of our bilateral relationship.

The visit started with Guangzhou, capital of Guangdong Province which has played a key role in China's economic development, accounting for around 10% of China's GDP. Guangzhou was chosen as a destination because of its historical connection with India as well as its important role in economic as well as people-to-people exchanges with India. Guangdong province accounts for 20 per cent of bilateral trade and 40 per cent of Indian nationals in China. The large Indian community serves as an important bridge between India and China.

During my stay in Guangzhou, I had a meeting with H.E. Mr. Hu Chunhua, Secretary of the provincial committee of the Chinese Communist Party of Guangdong, H.E. Mr. Zhu Xiaodan, Governor of the Guangdong province and H.E. Mr. Jiang Zengwei, Chairman of China Council for Promotion of International Trade. The Chinese leaders conveyed their strong interest in promoting business and people to people ties with India, especially the State of Gujarat with which they have a sister-province relationship. They enquired about various development initiatives launched by India and conveyed willingness to play a leadership role in enhancing trade and investment ties. I addressed the India-China Business Forum in which a large number of Indian and Chinese business representatives participated. In my address, I urged the business sectors of the two sides to take advantage of abundant opportunities available in India and China, which are today the engines driving global economic growth.

I addressed a large assembly of the Indian community who had gathered from different parts of China and Hong Kong. I urged them to serve as unofficial ambassadors of India and to do their utmost to strengthen our Closer

Development Partnership as well as promote people to people understanding. I also visited the Hualin Temple, which marks the arrival of Indian monk Bodhidharma to China in 6 century AD and stands testimony to the close cultural and historical linkages that bind our two countries together.

I was received with great warmth and friendship by H.E. Mr. Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China; H.E. Mr. Li Keqiang, Premier of the State Council and H.E. Mr. Zhang Dejiang, Chairman of the National People's Congress in Beijing. H.E. Mr. Li Yuanchao, Vice President of China, in a special gesture, joined a reception hosted in my honour by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, inviting prominent cultural and academic personalities. I delivered a keynote address at the historic and prestigious Peking University and attended a Round Table between Vice Chancellors and Heads of institutions of higher learning of the two countries. This was the first such interaction organized in this format between our two countries in the important area of academic exchanges. Ten MoUs providing for enhanced faculty and student exchanges as well as collaboration in research and innovation were concluded between the higher education institutions of the two countries and exchanged in my presence. I also gifted to the Peking University 350 books on Indian culture and literature including books in Sanskrit.

My interaction with the Chinese leadership was multi-faceted and comprehensive. It was conducted in a warm, friendly and cordial as well as candid manner. Discussions were wide-ranging and covered various areas of mutual interest. All four Chinese leaders fondly remembered their recent visits to India and conveyed their conviction that this State Visit would provide new impetus to the development of bilateral relations. There was deep appreciation of the role played by high-level visits in enhancing mutual understanding and political trust. We agreed on the need to build a solid foundation of goodwill between the two countries.

I conveyed to the Chinese leadership that there is a national consensus within India on strengthening India-China ties. India attaches high importance to its relations with China. There was convergence of views that India and China as two major powers must have greater strategic communication and work together in an uncertain global situation where economic recovery was fragile, geo-political risks were growing and the menace of terrorism proving to be a threat to the whole world. We agreed that our relationship transcends bilateral dimensions and has regional and global salience. We emphasised the importance of close cooperation in all international fora. I conveyed that India and China should join hands not just in the interests of the people of our countries but also for the good of the whole world. We thanked China for its support for India's membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. Chinese leaders welcomed India's membership and conveyed that it would strengthen the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and contribute to regional stability.

We agreed that as neighbours it is natural for us to have differences from time to time. But, what is important is that we should continue to advance our relationship while managing our differences.

Expanding bilateral trade and investment figured prominently in my discussions with the Chinese leadership. I was briefed on steps being taken by them to bring better balance in bilateral trade, including facilitating greater import of agricultural and pharmaceutical products from India. I conveyed that while addressing the imbalance is important, we should continue to expand bilateral trade. I welcomed greater Chinese investment into India especially in our flagship programmes such as 'Make in India', 'Digital India', 'Skill India', 'Smart Cities', etc.

The Chinese leadership conveyed their deep appreciation for India's economic progress of recent times and for our efforts to maintain rapid growth. We agreed to engage in practical cooperation and identify possible areas for early harvests in sectors such as railways, industrial zones, smart cities, renewable energy, power, space, aviation, etc. The Chinese side expressed appreciation for the visa facilitation measures adopted by us, including introduction of e-visa.

The Chinese leadership conveyed their resolve to seek a fair, reasonable and mutually acceptable resolution of the boundary question at an early date. I agreed with the Chinese leadership that while we continue to engage in seeking an early resolution of the boundary question, we must improve border management and ensure peace and tranquillity is maintained in border areas.

Terrorism was an important topic which I covered in my meetings. I conveyed to the Chinese leaders that there is universal concern over growing acts of terrorism. India has been a victim of terrorism for around three and a half decades. There is no good terrorist or bad terrorist. Terrorism respects neither ideology nor geographical boundaries. Wanton destruction is its only aim. Comprehensive cooperation by all countries of the world is essential to tackle this global menace. The international community must engage in strong and effective action. As close neighbours, India and China should work together. The Chinese leadership agreed that terrorism was a menace to the entire human race. They conveyed their willingness to enhance cooperation, including in the UN.

I conveyed that India faces acute energy shortage and we are engaged in efforts to significantly expand power generation within the country. We have announced a goal of 40% non-fossil fuel power generation capacity in our INDC and this target can be achieved only if we rapidly expand the generation of nuclear power. I conveyed that it was important for us to have a predictable environment in the above regard and hoped that China, as a close partner in the field of development as well as climate change, will play a positive and facilitative role.

Recalling the close linkages between our two peoples in ancient times as well as the positive role people-to-people exchanges can play in enhancing mutual understanding and friendship, the Chinese leadership and I both agreed on the need to pro-actively promote contacts in the field of tourism; between academic institutions; amongst students and the youth as well as through sub-regional twinning arrangements. In my speech at the Peking University, I outlined my vision of a people-centric partnership with China and suggested eight steps to realize this goal. These include : (i) enhancing mutual trust and mutual respect, (ii) expanding youth exchanges, (iii) promoting greater cooperation and co-production of audio-visual media, (iv) fostering greater intellectual and cultural exchanges, (v) expanding tourism contacts, (vi) encouraging greater civil society interaction on developmental challenges, (vii) stronger cooperation in multilateral fora and (viii) broader trade and investment ties.

In conclusion, my visit as well as discussions with Chinese leaders were fruitful and productive. Chinese leaders expressed gratitude for the forward looking approach adopted by us and willingness to take India-China relations to the next level, through all-round exchanges as well as continued communication at high political level on important issues. The BRICS Summit in Goa in October and the G-20 Summit in Hangzhou in September of this year will provide us opportunity to continue our dialogue in the above regard. I invited President Xi Jinping to pay a bilateral visit to India which he graciously accepted.

Noting that China is as keen as India to take our bilateral relations forward, I return to India with the conviction that we must jointly impart new momentum to this defining partnership of the 21st century.”

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