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Speech by Lok Sabha Speaker in the State Duma- Parliament of Russia (July 12, 2017)

July 13, 2017

His Excellency Mr. Vyacheslav Volodin, Speaker of the State Duma.

Honourable Deputies of the State Duma

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Zdrastvuite!

I am very happy to be in your great country. Russia is a great friend of India.

1. It is indeed a matter of great pride for me to address this respected House of your great nation. This is my first visit to your beautiful country as the Speaker of the Indian Parliament. Upon entering the beautiful and grand building of the State Duma, the members of my team and have been able to experience the glorious history of this great country. All of us have been touched by the friendly and enthusiastic welcome that has been extended to us by the members of the State Duma, and I would like to convey to our dear friends that all the members of the Parliament of the biggest democracy in the world, who represent the people of India, also reciprocate these feelings of affection and friendship with similar enthusiasm. As in India, the Parliament of Russia also outlines the diversity of the country in a befitting manner. Valentina Tereshkova who was the first woman to go into space is a member of this house. Even today, the people of India remember her visit to our country. It is a matter of pride that eminent members such as former world Chess champion Anatoly Karpov, famous tennis player Marat Safin, figure skating champion Irina Rodnina and famous actress Elena Drapeko are enhancing the prestige of this great House. I have brought with me the message of friendship and the best wishes of 1.25 billion Indians. Indian people not only have a special place for Russia in their hearts, but also have high regard for your country. They view Russia as a true friend which stands by us during the time of need.
2. Now as Speaker of the Indian Parliament and as a Member of the Parliament for long years that I have represented my constituency, I have the first-hand knowledge of experiencing this expression of goodwill cutting across the party lines. There is unanimity in this sentiment. President Mr. Putin in his address to the Indian Parliament during his first visit in 2000 had said that "Russian-Indian relations are free of any political fluctuations. They are stable, firm, and they are not altered by time. He not only made this statement but also created consensus for strengthening the strategic partnership and relations between our two countries. The mutual understanding and the trust between the then Prime Minister of India, Mr. Atal Bihari Vajpayee

and President Mr. Valdimir Putin led to the development of new dimensions in India-Russia relations.

3. The Special and Privileged Partnership between our two countries has been natural and the leadership of both the countries has taken care to strengthen it with the passage of time. There is not a single area where we do not have positive cooperation. Russia has always been a reliable and true friend of India which has helped us in ensuring our defence preparations immediately after independence, setting up of nuclear power plants, and supported India in international fora. India also has always wholeheartedly supported Russia.
4. Friends, India and Russia share age-old relations. In the 15th Century, Russian traveler Afanasy Nikitin visited India and shared his memories with Russian people through his book 'Journey Beyond The Three Seas'. This is the first written source which brought Indian culture closer to the Russian people. I am proud to state that Leo Tolstoy and Mahatma Gandhi were two luminaries of the same mindset. Tolstoy's book 'The Kingdom of God is Within You' influenced Mahatma Gandhi in a significant manner.
5. The 18th Annual bilateral Summit held in St Petersburg on June 01, 2017 has helped to strengthen our friendship. There has been significant progress in the agreements signed since 2014, and the vision statement signed in 2017 has laid down the joint framework for future cooperation. As members of Parliament, we will have to play a special role in ensuring their early implementation in a timely and effective manner.
6. This year we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Russia in a grand manner. More than 150 events are being held in both countries in this regard. We are also organizing the 'Namaste Russia' programme in Russia. Indian films have always been popular in Russia. Mr. Raj Kapoor, Mr. Mithun Chakraborty, famous artist Hema Malini who is a member of our delegation and her film 'Seeta Aur Geeta' are also very popular in Russia. The song 'Mera Joota Hai Japani..., Sar pe Lal Topi Rusi' brings a smile to faces of all Indians and Russians. India and Russia were also involved in joint production of film such as the film 'Journey Beyond the Three Seas' and its Hindi version. I would like to thank our Russian friends for the successful organization of the 3rd International Day of Yoga in 68 regions of Russia.
7. Russia is the biggest country in the world in terms of area and India is the second biggest country in the world in terms of population. Both these facts present opportunities as well as challenges in the administration of our countries. Friends, the Parliament of any country is a medium for expressing the will of its citizens. Duly elected Deputies and Members of Parliament voice the expectations of the people, and have the major responsibility of creating an atmosphere which leads to the realization of these expectations. The debate to analyze any issue must be logical and lead to the selection of the best path for the country's progress, as the laws passed by us have far reaching effects. This is the reason why I established the (Speaker Research Initiative- SRI) in the Indian Parliament which enables members of the Parliament receive essential information on complicated issues from experts. The rapid contemporary expansion of communication, social media and information is bringing the world closer where all of us are living in an increasingly transparent environment. Whatever we do is constantly examined and evaluated. As in other countries, the proceedings of the Parliament are broadcasted live on Television in India. This enables the people to see the work of their representative close manner.
8. The Indian economy is witnessing rapid growth. The growth rate of 7.1 % in 2017 is the highest among emerging economies. This is expected to increase upto 7.6% in the coming year. The

Indian Government introduced the biggest ever economic reforms in the country in the form of the Goods & Services Tax on July 1, 2017. This will have a beneficial effect on the Indian economy. This will lead to a faster rate of economic growth.

9. Last year (2016) you had elections to the State Duma. Observers from India had also come and were impressed with the smooth manner in which the elections were conducted. India has been successfully conducting elections in a fair and transparent manner. A government with 2/3rd majority was formed for the first time in three decades, following the 2014 Parliamentary Elections in India.
10. We have successfully implemented the use of Electronic Voting Machines for elections. The Election Commission of Russia had recently sent a delegation to study this process which expressed interest in the use of the Electronic Voting Machines that we manufacture.
11. Dear Friends, there has been a tradition of constant dialogue and contacts between us. We need to enhance this. I fondly recall Speaker Naryshkin's visit to India in 2015, and I am remembering the discussions I had with him. Russia had sent a team of Women Parliamentarians to India for the 1st BRICS Women Parliamentarians Forum in August 2016. Now we need to promote dialogue and contacts between the young Parliamentarians from both countries. We are happy to note the constitution of the Parliamentary Friendship Group on India in the State Duma, and I am happy to announce the formation of a similar Friendship Group in the Indian Parliament.
12. We should further expand our Parliamentary Cooperation between the State Legislatures/Legislative Assemblies of the Regions of the Russian Federation and the States of India. Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his interaction with the Governors of 16 Regions of the Russian Federation on the sidelines of the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum on 2nd June 2017 also highlighted the importance of interaction between the Regional and State legislatures.
13. On the bilateral front, we need to see how the Parliaments of both our countries can assist in taking forward the policy decisions of both governments including the Agreements signed between our countries, and provide impetus to new possibilities in trade. India is currently building 6 nuclear power units in collaboration with Russia. The Kudankulam Project is an excellent example of nuclear cooperation between India and Russia. As I mentioned earlier, Russia is the only country with which India has actual cooperation on the ground in civil nuclear field. Historically, defence Relations between India and Russia have always been important.
14. We have ambitious plans to build an 'Energy-bridge' between the two countries. We need to expedite action regarding the opening up new areas like the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), setting up of the Green Corridor, facilitating the transfer of technology, and facilitating people to people contacts.
15. We agree upon the need for reforms in the United Nations, especially in the United Nations Security Council so that this organization is able to tackle contemporary challenges and threats in an effective manner. I would once again like to thank Russia for its strong support for India's candidature for a permanent seat in the expanded Security Council.
16. It is essential that the world comes together to face the increasing threat of terrorism in a decisive and collective manner without any double standards. All countries will have to work together to disrupt terrorist networks, cutting off their funding, and prohibiting cross-border movement.

17. Russia's support played an important role in ensuring full member status for India in the recently concluded Astana Summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on June 09, 2017. We need to enhance our cooperation in context of BRICS in a similar manner. We discussed this in a comprehensive manner in the Parliamentary Commission yesterday.
18. Friends, I would once again like to reiterate that our relations have not only withstood the test of time but also gained strength over the years. I am fully convinced that we can work together for a better world order. I would like to convey my best wishes to the State Duma for all its subsequent endeavors. All the members of the Indian Parliament are friends who are always eager for friendship and cooperation for the benefit of people from both countries. I would once again like to thank you for giving me the opportunity to address you. These memories will be etched in my mind forever.
19. Keeping in my mind the age-old friendship between the two countries, I would like to conclude by conveying the expression of love, affection, and togetherness through a famous Sanskrit couplet: (He who stands with you in good times, bad times, drought, riot, war, King's court, and at the cremation ground; is a real friend)

Spasibo!



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