

**Press Information Bureau
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President's Secretariat**

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Banquet hosted in honour of His Excellency, Mr. Almazbek Sharshenovich Atambaev, the President of the Kyrgyz Republic Rashtrapati Bhavan

Your Excellency, Mr. Almazbek Sharshenovich Atambaev, President of the Kyrgyz Republic,

2. It is my privilege to receive you on your first State Visit to India. On behalf of our Government and people, I extend a warm welcome to you, Madame Raisa Atambaeva and the distinguished members of your delegation.

3. Your State Visit, Excellency, is the first State Visit to India by a President of your country after a gap of 13 years. It is also taking place at an important juncture - as we approach the 25th anniversary of the establishment of our diplomatic relations. I have no doubt, Your Excellency, that the discussions held today and the agreements that have been concluded will mark the start of a new chapter in the history of our relationship.

4. At the outset, I would like to state that we have always considered the Kyrgyz Republic to be an important part of our extended neighbourhood. Bishkek is closer to New Delhi than many major cities of India; **and** New Delhi is the closest world capital to Bishkek.

5. Our proximity is not only geographical but also historical and civilisational. We have a shared past, reflected in many elements of our culture. The Buddhist themes of engravings and statues found in Kyrgyzstan bear testimony to our age-old linkages. Our friendship flourished during the Soviet era and our Parliamentarians and leaders have maintained regular contacts since then. After Kyrgyzstan became an independent state, it was but natural for India to continue - and, in fact - strengthen our long standing co-operative relationship.

6. We are happy to see that Kyrgyzstan has progressed so well in the last twenty five years. One of its finest achievements is its steadfast preference for - and adherence to democracy. The credit for this is due to Your Excellency's vision and

leadership. We, in India, believe that a democratic system represents much more than just the periodic exercise of voting in elections. It stands for continuous nourishment of the institutions of democracy. Building these institutions is not an easy task, it demands personal as well as collective sacrifices. We share your satisfaction that Kyrgyzstan, under your leadership, has succeeded in this effort.

7. Another commonality which binds us is our commitment to secularism. Both our nations, being pluralistic societies, share the view that harmonious co-existence of citizens of diverse faiths and ethnicities is vital for a nation's progress and growth.

8. Excellency, for India, inclusive development has been a key priority. With our growing population of 1.25 billion people and our resource constraints, our choices have led us to prioritise our abundant human capital. We have given emphasis to innovation and the development of indigenous, appropriate and cost effective solutions to address the challenges that we face as we pursue our developmental goals. Capacity building is one aspect of our experience that we have been glad to share with friends like Kyrgyzstan.

9. India values our co-operation with Kyrgyzstan in regional and international fora. In this context, Excellency, I take this opportunity to reiterate India's appreciation for Kyrgyzstan's unambiguous support to India's candidature for permanent membership of the UN Security Council. We are also happy to have received your support for our endeavors towards India's full membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

10. The success of our mutually beneficial partnership in diverse sectors of our common interest demonstrates the power of friendship between nations - summed up in an old Kyrgyz proverb which, translated into English suggests, "Friendship between two persons helps to overcome one obstacle; Friendship between two peoples helps to overcome a thousand." (Эки эрдин достугу бир белден ашырат, Эки элдин достугу мин белден ашырат).

11. I am, therefore, confident that working together, India and Kyrgyzstan can achieve much for the betterment of not only our two peoples and our region but also of the world.

12. With these words, Excellency, I welcome you once again and wish you and Madame Raisa Atambaeva, a comfortable stay - and a very fruitful visit to India.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I invite you to please join me in raising a toast:-

- to the good health and success of His Excellency, President Almazbek Sharshenovich Atambaev and Madame Raisa Atambaeva;
- to the continued progress, prosperity and well-being of the friendly people of Kyrgyzstan; and
- to the enduring friendship between India and Kyrgyzstan

Jashaseen (Long live) Kyrgyzstan! Jai Hind !

HS/SBP