

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA AT THE BANQUET IN
HONOUR OF THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF CANADA, H.E. THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE DAVID JOHNSTON**

RASHTRAPATI BHAVAN, NEW DELHI: 24-02-2014

I am delighted to welcome Your Excellency and the eminent members of your delegation.

Your State Visit to India, the first such bilateral engagement in more than a decade and a half, is taking place at an important juncture. This is a moment when both our Governments have committed themselves with renewed vigour to dialogue and initiatives aimed at increasing our mutual understanding and achieving the promising potential of the complementarities between us. Indeed, your visit reflects the transformation that has taken place in the India-Canada relationship.

Our friendship dates back to the early days of India's independence. Pandit Nehru, our first Prime Minister, had visited Canada in 1949 and had been profoundly touched by the warmth of the Canadian leadership and people. He and Prime Minister Pearson developed a close rapport. They were together credited for their key role in achieving the Korean Armistice signed in July 1953 and in defusing the Suez Crisis of 1956. These are just two instances of their

numerous joint efforts and outstanding contribution for world peace.

Your Excellency, although Canada and India are separated by continents and the oceans, we are bound by shared values, our political and legal traditions and our deep commitment to democracy, pluralism, individual liberties and the rule of law. We both celebrate our secular traditions and the diversity of our peoples. These are, indeed, the firm underpinning of a very rewarding partnership.

We are, today, engaged in strategic dialogue to leverage the synergy that exists between our economies in many sectors. We are focusing on such areas of interest to both our Governments and our peoples. The agreements signed today will, no doubt, add momentum to our bilateral agenda.

In the field of energy, particularly, we look forward to our work together in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy and efficient utilization of hydrocarbons and renewables.

Canada, as a major producer of food and a pioneer in agri-processing has, for many years been a key source of India's requirement of pulses. As India pursues her goals of food security and the strengthening of our agriculture sector, we look forward to our co-operation in this field – including in the production of fertilizers.

It is a matter of satisfaction that a growing number of Indian firms are finding success in Canada - as are Canadian companies in India. Our CEOs' Forum will play an important part in expanding our economic ties. We welcome Canadian investors and are keen to work with Canadian partners – especially in the development of infrastructure and upgrading skills and technology in India. I am confident that they will find it worthwhile.

One of our major strengths is the ease with which our students, scientists and institutes of higher education have been able to work together in research and development. Our general strategy should be to facilitate and enhance the partnerships between our Universities. They can build on our considerable experience in academic and scientific collaboration.

Your Excellency,

India and Canada have both weathered the recent global economic downturn through fiscal discipline and timely policy measures. We have set an example and contributed to constructive deliberations in international economic institutions on stabilizing the situation.

As two nations committed to peace and progress in all parts of the world, I am confident that we will continue to closely interact with each other in our endeavours for this common objective in the United Nations and other international fora.

Our many linkages have fruitfully evolved over the years. I would like to pay tribute to the community of over one million Canadians

of Indian origin who have worked hard to build the spirit of mutual respect and understanding that exists between our societies today.

The “Inukshuk” that will be installed near Shanti Path tomorrow will be a lasting symbol of the amity and fund of goodwill between our peoples. We very much appreciate this gesture and welcome it.

With these words, I once again welcome Your Excellency and Madame Sharon Johnston and wish you and your distinguished delegation a comfortable and enjoyable stay in India.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, may I request you to join me in raising a toast:-

- to the good health of His Excellency, the Right Honourable David Johnston and Madame Sharon Johnston;
- to the continued progress and prosperity of the Canadian people; and
- to closer friendship and co-operation between India and Canada.