

PRESS STATEMENT BY HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA DURING HIS VISIT TO TURKMENISTAN

Ashgabat, April 2, 2022

Your Excellency President Mr. Serdar Berdimuhamedov
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is the first ever visit by a President of India to Turkmenistan, and also one of the first visits hosted by the new and young leader of Turkmenistan. I express my appreciation and gratitude to His Excellency, the President of Turkmenistan for the warm welcome and generous hospitality extended to me and my delegation. Your gesture reflects the vibrancy of the friendship between our two great nations.

The other milestone we mark is the 30th anniversary of establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Turkmenistan. We have good reasons to be satisfied with the development of our multifaceted bilateral ties over the last three decades, and especially in the last decade.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During my meeting today with the President of Turkmenistan, we held a detailed discussion on the state and prospects of bilateral relations. We also exchanged views on various regional and international issues of importance. We have agreed to intensify efforts to further strengthen our multifaceted partnership.

Economic relations strengthen bilateral ties. We agreed to do more to expand bilateral trade which has remained modest. Our business communities must deepen their engagement, understand each other's regulations and identify new areas of trade and investment.

I am confident that the MoU between the Financial Intelligence Unit of India and Financial Monitoring Service of Turkmenistan signed today would strengthen the framework of economic cooperation between the two countries.

Connectivity is critical for any trading arrangement. Towards this end, we highlighted the significance of the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Ashgabat Agreement on International Transport and Transit Corridor. I pointed out that the Chabahar port built by India in Iran could be used to improve trade between India and Central Asia.

Cooperation in energy was one of the key areas of our discussions today. On the TAPI pipeline, I suggested that issues related to security of the pipeline and key business principles may be addressed in Technical and Expert level meetings.

We have also identified new areas of cooperation such as Disaster Management on which we have signed an MoU today. I conveyed India's readiness to partner with Turkmenistan in its drive towards digitalisation. Space can be another area of mutually beneficial cooperation.

Our countries share centuries old civilizational and cultural linkages. During the talks, I underlined the importance of holding regular cultural events in each other's territory. I am sure the Programme of Cooperation on Culture and Arts for the period 2022-25, signed today, will give direction to our cultural cooperation.

We emphasised on the need for both countries to cooperate closely on the effective management of the Covid-19 pandemic that has affected our population. I proposed that mutual recognition of Covid vaccination certificates by both countries would go a long way in facilitating travel of our citizens.

Turkmenistan is an important partner for India in the India – Central Asia Summit framework, the first of which India hosted virtually in January this year. We agreed to further enhance cooperation under the framework flowing from the India-Central Asia Summit.

We welcome Turkmenistan's readiness to send a youth delegation to India within the ambit of India-Central Asia cultural cooperation.

The MoU on Youth Affairs signed today would further intensify exchanges between our youth.

Our discussions also stressed that we continue cooperation in regional and multilateral fora, including the United Nations, on issues of international relevance. I thanked Turkmenistan for its support to India's permanent membership in a reformed and expanded UN Security Council as well as for India's initiatives as a non-permanent member of UNSC for the period of 2021-22.

As immediate neighbours of Afghanistan, our countries are naturally concerned about the developments within that country and their external repercussions. We share a broad 'regional consensus' on the issues related to Afghanistan, which includes formation of a truly representative and inclusive government, combating terrorism and drug trafficking, central role of the UN, providing immediate humanitarian assistance for the people of Afghanistan and preserving the rights of women, children and other national ethnic groups and minorities.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, and members of the media

I look forward to welcoming President Mr. Serdar Berdimuhamedov in India on a mutually convenient date in due course.

And, may I conclude by saying how truly I and my delegation are impressed by the beautiful and awe inspiring "white marble" city of Ashgabat.

Thank you very much!