

H. E. Mr. D. Tsogtbaatar, Foreign Minister of Mongolia,
Distinguished members of the Mongolian delegation,
Friends from the media,
Ladies & gentlemen,
Sain Beno – Namaskar!

This is my first visit to your beautiful country. I am deeply moved by the warm reception and hospitality extended by Foreign Minister Tsogtbaatar and the Mongolian Government.

I also feel special, since my visit is also the first by an Indian Foreign Minister to Mongolia after a long gap of 42 years. But I am sure that in tandem with our ever growing engagement, we will have more frequent visits now on at Foreign Minister's level.

Mongolia is not only our strategic partner for India but also a spiritual neighbour. We share long historical links. Mongolia is well known in India for the valour of her kings and her strong Buddhist heritage.

India was among the first countries, outside the erstwhile Communist bloc, to establish diplomatic relations with Mongolia. In the six decades of our partnership, our relations have grown from strength to strength. This is reflected in our widening and deepening strategic partnership today, based on the common ideals of democracy and freedom, and enriched by mutual respect and trust. This morning, Foreign Minister Tsogtbaatar and I presided over the 6th Session of the Indian-Mongolia Joint Committee on Cooperation, where we discussed issues covering a wide range of our bilateral engagement. We agreed that Prime Minister Modi's historic visit in 2015, the first ever by an Indian Prime Minister to Mongolia, provided a fresh impetus to our relations and qualitatively raised the level of our engagement.

We also agreed that we should make all efforts to maintain and accelerate the momentum of our interaction in all areas. We reviewed the progress in our on-going collaborative projects, including the refinery project selected by the Government of Mongolia for implementation with the support of one billion dollar Indian Line of Credit.

We directed our officials to coordinate follow up action on each side for the expeditious implementation of these projects. Our strong political ties must be complemented by commensurate levels of trade, economy and investment.

Today, India has emerged as one of the fastest growing large economies in the world. With its rich natural resources and strong aspiration for development, Mongolia can be an important partner in India's growth story. Collaboration for our ongoing refinery project is in recognition of this fact.

Foreign Minister Tsogtbaatar and I agreed to explore possible ways to identify new areas of cooperation in all sectors of mutual interest and to enhance our bilateral trade and investments. We discussed economic cooperation in areas such as infrastructure development, energy, services and IT.

I call upon the Mongolian business community to seize economic opportunities arising out of India's growth.

We agreed to remove institutional and logistical impediments to boost our trade, tourism and people to people contacts. In this regard, we also agreed to explore possibility of launching direct air connectivity between our two capitals.

I reiterated to Foreign Minister Tsogtbaatar our continued commitment for capacity building programmes for the people of Mongolia, including in areas such as, training in English language and IT.

We look forward to more students visiting India for pursuing vocational education & training under the Indian Technical & Economic Cooperation programme, also known as ITEC, and through scholarships offered by the Indian Council of Cultural Relations. We would encourage students from Mongolia to pursue studies in Indian art, music and culture which would further reinforce our cultural links.

Given our common Buddhist heritage, we also encourage students from Mongolia to visit India for further study and research in the field of Buddhist studies. Foreign Minister Tsogtbaatar and I also exchanged views on regional and international issues of common interest.

We discussed some of the pressing global challenges facing the humanity, particularly the scourge of terrorism and agreed to collaborate bilaterally and in international arena to ward off this evil and thwart the designs of those who extend support to terrorist outfits.

I conveyed to Foreign Minister Tsogtbaatar that India sees Mongolia as a factor of stability in East Asia and believes that Mongolia's social and economic development is important for peace and prosperity in the region and an opportunity for further deepening of cooperation between India and Mongolia.

Dear friends,

I am equally happy to inform you that during my stay, I will be participating in a special event to commemorate the birth centenary of the Venerable 19th Kushi Bakula Rinpoche, who was not only an eminent Buddhist leader, but also the longest serving Ambassador of India to Mongolia.

The event will mark his contribution to the promotion of Buddhism in Mongolia and to the deepening of civilizational and spiritual bonds between our two countries. I express our gratitude to the Mongolian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gandan Monastery and other Mongolian organizations for arranging this event during my visit.

To conclude, let me, once again, thank Foreign Minister Tsogtbaatar for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to me and my delegation. I am touched by the affection of the Mongolian people. India and Mongolia share a bond of peace and piety through Buddhism.

As we tread the path of developing our partnership; I am sure, the teachings of Lord Buddha will continue to guide us.

Bayar la ! (dhanyawad)