

**Embassy of India
Tunis**

**Speech on India at Temimi Foundation
17th January 2015**

India is the 7th largest country in size, 2nd largest in population with 29 Provinces and 7 Union Territories.

It is a geographically diverse country:

- a) The great mountains – the Himalaya ranges, the highest mountains in the world
- b) The river plains
- c) The desert &
- d) Peninsula

Its current population is 1.2 billion.

It is the most diverse country in the world – with 22 official languages; in all, 1652 languages are spoken including tribal languages. There is great religious diversity also – Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Budhists, Sikhs, Jews, Jains, Zorostrians and many others are all found here.

40 percent of India's population is between 18-35 years, in other words, India has a vigorous young population. It is estimated that by 2025, India will have the largest young population in the world.

India also an innovative business community which uses frugal and un wasteful ways of doing things.

Political: India practices parliamentary democracy in which the Prime Minister is the leader of the single-largest party in the Lower House of Parliament. He rules as long as he enjoys majority in the Lower House. The President is not directly-elected, but is indirectly elected by the Members of Parliament & of all the provincial assemblies, according to an accepted formula.

The Indian system follows the British Parliamentary system with one important difference in India, the constitution is supreme, not Parliament. The higher Indian judiciary can decide on the constitutionality of any law passed by Parliament. Parliament can however amend the constitution and our constitution has been amended several times.

The Indian constitution laid down the secular character of our State. This has meant:-

- 1) There is no state religion. No religion can receive state patronage.

- 2) The state will not accord any preferential treatment to any citizen or discriminate against him simply on the grounds that he professes a certain religion. This does not mean the State is anti-religion in the classic, European sense it is usually understood in. The State takes into consideration the religious sentiments of the people, and ensures that they are not hurt.

Federalism is an important aspect of the Indian constitution. The objective of federation is unity in diversity, devolution of authority and decentralization in administration. Its fundamental characteristic is the division of powers between 2 sets of governments – a Central Government and Provincial Government, each independent of the other in its own sphere of activity. A federal government, in a limited form, was already in position under the British rule. It was made systematic and constitutional after independence for a multi-racial and multi-lingual country like India, federalism was a natural choice. The drafters of the constitution were careful to ensure that in case of any future conflict between the unity and diversity of India, the unity of India be preserved. Thus, the Union Government has supremacy over the States in a number of matters vitally affecting the interests of the nation. Apart from the division of powers between central and provincial governments, the provinces are also represented at the Centre in the Upper House of Parliament which has members elected to it by the provincial assemblies.

India is the world's largest democracy with around 780 million voters

552 – Member Lower House

238 - Member Upper House

India is the sixth on a list of 12 mega bio-diversity countries of the world. It has 81,250 species of animals and 45,000 species of plants, i.e, a great wealth of bio-diversity.

We have an old and long-established system of environment protection.

Economy: The Indian economy is the 10th largest economy in the world with a GDP in absolute terms of US\$ 2 trillion, with a per capita GDP of US\$ 1550. In terms of purchasing power parity, it is the 3rd largest economy in the world. Growth rate has been on average between 7% and 9% between 2000 and 2007. It has slowed since and is now at around 5.6%. It is a member of the G-20 and is among top 20 global trading countries according to WTO.

Agriculture: Agriculture contributes 15% of GDP but employs 59% of the population. We produce around 230-240 million tonnes of food grain and are self-sufficient in food grain, i.e, rice, wheat and coarse cereals.

Industry: Industry accounts for 26% of GDP and employs 22% of the workforce. In 2012, India's industrial production, accounts to 20 billion, was 10th largest in the world.

Some of the biggest industrial sectors: petroleum – we are a huge importer of crude as well as exporter of refined petroleum products. The world's largest refinery complex is in India – it processes 1.24 million barrels a day.

The chemical industry is the third largest producer in Asia and one of the top 5 global producers of agro chemicals, polymers and plastics, dyes and other chemicals.

India produces 8% of the world's pharmaceutical supply. The industry is worth around US\$ 25 billion. Every second child in Africa and every 3rd child in the world is vaccinated by Indian vaccines. Around 60,000 Indian brands of generic medicines are sold around the world. Also an important producer of cheap ARV drugs against AIDS widely sold in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Engineering goods, like transport equipment, machine tools, transformers are among our other important exports.

Gems and jewellery is an important economic sector. India is the largest consumer of gold in the world. 11 out of 12 diamonds in any jewellery is cut and polished in India. This industry contributes 7% of GDP, employs millions and is one of our top exports.

Textiles is also another important sector in production and exports, accounting for 4% of GDP and 14% of industrial production.

India is the 8th largest steel producing country in the world. It is also the third largest producer of nitrogenous fertilizers in the world.

India is the largest producer of milk (around 125 million tonnes per year) in the world. It is also the largest producer and consumer of black tea. It is also an important producer of rice, coffee, tobacco, leather products and cotton yarn.

Services: Services sector has been the fastest-growing sector of Indian economy over the last couple of decades; it accounts for 57% of GDP and includes telecom, ICT including software development and business process outsourcing, construction, education, health care, tourism, trade and banking. There are around 220 million internet users in India, 10% of world's online population; second largest internet-using population after China which has 300 million. India is the second largest mobile phone user in the world with over 900 million users, of which nearly 200 million are internet-enabled.

Trade: Until 1991, Indian economy was intentionally isolated from world markets to protect its economy and ensure a home-grown industry base. In 1991, the restrictions on imports and FDI were liberalized and relaxed. Since then, foreign trade has grown sharply, and traded goods and services now account for 47% of GDP. Our major trading partners are China, USA, UAE and EU. Our major exports are engineering goods,

petroleum products, chemicals and pharma, gems & jewellery, textiles. Our major imports are crude petroleum, machinery, electronic goods and gold and silver.

Our exports are able to pay for around 80% of our imports. With global oil prices dropping so low, our chronic trade deficit will drop significantly and may cease.

FDI: Between 2000 and 2010, India received around US\$ 200 billion in FDI. Now receives around \$ 40 billion annually, set to rise dramatically after the new government has put in place relaxed norms to attract FDI in diverse sectors.

There is believed to be a middle class of around 350 million people. Poverty continues and it is estimated by the World Bank that 180 million poor people live in India on less than US\$ 1.25 a day. Government is trying to reduce poverty by various poverty alleviation programmes. Better education and skill development programmes are also being introduced.

Literacy rate is still not good at 75%, but is better than before. Literacy rates vary sharply by region, gender and different social groups.

25 million Indian work overseas and remit US\$ 70 billion annually, of which around \$ 40 billion from Middle East alone.

India has the third largest scientific and research community in the world. As a recent example of our scientific capabilities and our frugality, I want to mention the great success India has just had with its mission to Mars. Titled 'Mangalyaan', India launched in November 2013 a rocket towards Mars which has successfully placed a satellite in orbit around the planet Mars. The satellite entered the orbit of Mars on Wednesday, 24th September, thus making India the only Asian country to have successfully done so, and only the 4th in the world, after US, EU and Russia. The scientists at NASA have congratulated India's space scientists on this achievement.

However, what is truly remarkable is that this Mission cost only \$ 74 million, less than Rs. 7 per kilometer, which is less than the cost of travel in an Indian city by Tooktook. As PM Modi remarked, it cost less than the budget of Hollywood movie Gravity. It has only cost Rs. 4, or 100 Millimes per Indian citizen.

Bollywood: Biggest producer of films in the world. Around 1600 every year compared to around 500 in US & 700 in China. 2.7 billion cinema tickets sold every year, while Hollywood sells 1.36 billion tickets. Our film industry is an important part of India's identity in the rest of the world.

TV & Print Media: India has perhaps largest number of newspapers in the world: 94067, of which 12000 are dailies. It is the second largest market in the world for newspapers – 99 million newspaper copies are sold. It is perhaps the only large media market in the world where print media subscriptions are also rising while internet-based news websites are also growing.

There are around 170 radio stations and 860 television channels with 400 channels devoted to news. The press is fiercely free.

Make in India initiative:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has announced an important new initiative in September 2014 to attract investment into India to enable large scale manufacturing titled, the 'Make in India' initiative it has provided various incentives to domestic and foreign investors including allowing increased foreign ownership in sectors like construction, defence production, railways and others. The inflow of foreign investment has increased dramatically since the coming into power of the new government. As our PM has said, India's strengths are democracy, demography and demand.

International Yoga Day – June 21:

Prime Minister Modi, in his address to the UNGA in September 2014, had called for declaring 21st June International Day of Yoga. The UN Resolution to declare this was passed in a record time with 177 countries co-sponsoring it and it is expected that the physical, mental and spiritual benefits of Yoga will be brought to an increasing number of people in the world by the activities we hope to organize around this day.

Bilateral Relations: India-Tunisia has cordial and friendly relations since diplomatic relations were established in 1958. The two countries had steadily cooperative relations with some high-level visits and many agreements being signed. The Indian Vice-President had visited in 1964 and Prime Minister had visited Tunisia in 1984. With the advent of democracy in Tunisia, relations have become closer. The Foreign Minister of India paid a bilateral visit to Tunisia for the first time since independence in 2014. Prime Minister Modi, in his speech to the UNGA in September 2014, hailed Tunisia as a symbol of democracy in the West Asia and North Africa region, We look forward to working closely with the new elected government of Tunisia to further deepen our political, trade and investment relations. I am also working to establish close ties between the Indian and Tunisian legislatures, i.e., between the elected representatives of the largest and the newest democracies in the world!

Bilateral trade is still at a low level and can be very much increased. The annual trade turnover is of around US\$ 600 million with the balance of trade being consistently in favour of Tunisia. India is the biggest buyer of Tunisia phosphate since many years,

accounting for over 50% of Tunisia's global phosphoric acid exports. There is an Indian joint venture in Tunisia – TIFERT for the manufacture of phosphoric acid. This US\$ 450 million project has 30% shares owned by Indian companies and 70% shares owned by GPC and CPG. The entire capacity of the plant is 360,000 tonnes of phosphoric acid, but unfortunately the plant is operating at only 36% of its capacity since it was made operational in July 2013 due to labour unrest in the mining region and the poor transportation of the phosphate from Gafsa to Skhira.

In an important new development, an assembly plant of Mahindra pickup trucks was established in Sousse in 2013 by a Tunisian business group. Mahindra vehicles have earned a reputation for robustness among Tunisian buyers and are well considered. A plant of Dabur, an Indian cosmetics and healthcares company, has also been set up recently in Enfidha.

The cooperation in Science & Technology between our two countries is also an important one. The two governments provide funding for joint research proposals submitted by Indian and Tunisian scientists in diverse fields. The Institut Pasteur of Tunis is in a collaborative relationship with the prestigious International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology of New Delhi and share expertise in the control of infectious diseases including malaria and Leishmaniasis. Since 2010, an important scientific scholarship of India called the CV Raman Fellowship for African Researchers is available and is being used by Tunisians. These are full scholarships for advanced scientific research in the premier institutes of India for periods ranging from 6 to 12 months. Every year, between 5 and 10 of these scholarships are being used.

There are also between 80 and 100 scholarships being used every year by Tunisian graduates, government employees, public servants for studying and training in diverse fields like accountancy, media studies, IT, English language skills, business studies and music and dance. The link provided by these students and scientists is a valuable one.

There is great potential for Indian auto products and agricultural vehicles and pharma products to be made available in Tunisia. There is also great interest among other Indian investors to establish manufacturing units in Tunisia in diverse areas, provided that labour unrest is brought under control. I foresee growing cooperation between our two countries in many fields in the years ahead.
