



Speech by the President of India, Shri Pranab Mukherjee at the banquet hosted in honour of H.E Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, The President of the Republic of Cyprus

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Your Excellency, Mr. Nicos Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus,
Distinguished members of the Cypriot delegation,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure to welcome you, Mr. President and the distinguished members of your delegation on your first State Visit to India.

2. India attaches great value to her excellent relations with Cyprus. As young nations that are simultaneously ancient civilizations, we enjoy, today, a bilateral discourse that is historic, broad-based and multi-dimensional, based on our long-standing economic and cultural exchanges. Throughout your country's struggle against colonialism, India was happy to offer her wholehearted and substantive support. The illustrious Archbishop Makarios, first President of the Republic of Cyprus, and the Founding Fathers of independent India, Mahatma Gandhi and Pandit Nehru regarded each other with high esteem. India has consistently stood for the independence, sovereignty, territorial integrity and unity of Cyprus and peaceful resolution of the Cyprus problem - and we shall continue to do so. Excellency, the efforts made by you in finding a lasting solution to the Cyprus issue are indeed commendable. India is firmly committed to extending our unequivocal support to the Cyprus talks for finding a viable and just solution. Our good wishes are with the Government and the people of Cyprus.

Excellency,

3. As modern, independent and democratic nations with many shared values, India and Cyprus have many convergences on regional and global issues. We have been working well together to achieve common objectives in various international fora. India appreciates the consistent support of Cyprus for her legitimate claim to permanent membership of a reformed UN Security Council. India is also thankful for the efforts of Cyprus in support of her entry, as a member, into the Nuclear Suppliers' Group.

4. Both our countries have been supportive of each other's efforts for peace and progress in our regions and the world. Having suffered invasions, occupation, conflict and adversity throughout our history, we both desire peace and stability for our respective peoples to achieve their developmental aspirations. India condemns terrorism in all its forms and manifestations and believes that responsible nations such as ours must continue efforts, with a sense of urgency, to collectively and comprehensively address the dark forces of extremism, terrorism and radicalisation which attempt to weaken the very fabric of democratic, pluralistic and open societies.

5. Your visit, Excellency, is thus opportune in many ways - primarily as it is taking place at a time when our nations are engaged in intensifying our bilateral co-operation in diverse areas of our common interest.

6. India lauds the economic recovery of Cyprus under your leadership, particularly its return to a positive rate of growth - among the fastest in the European Union. In recent years, India has, fortunately, seen rapid economic progress - despite the global slowdown - and achieved a steady growth rate of about 7%. We welcome friends to take advantage of our flagship programmes like 'Make in India' and 'Skill India' - and join India's growth story. Our information technology sector as also our renewable energy, natural gas and hydrocarbons, sustainable tourism, infrastructure and health and wellness sectors are open for partnerships and foreign investment. The recent signing of the revised Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement is a good step in this direction. I am confident, Excellency, that your State Visit will result in new initiatives in all these areas of immense potential.

7. With these words, I once again thank you for your warm gesture in conferring upon me the Grand Collar of the Order of Makarios-III which I had the honour to accept in the name of the people of India. It shall long be valued as a symbol of the enduring friendship between India and Cyprus.

8. I wish you, Mr. President and the members of your delegation a very successful visit to India.

9. With these words, Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you to join me in raising a toast to:-

-the health and well-being of President Anastasiades, President of the Republic of Cyprus;

-to the continued progress and prosperity of the people of Cyprus; and
-to ever-lasting friendship between India and Cyprus.

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