



Press Statement by Prime Minister during State Visit of President of Belarus (September 12, 2017)

Posted On: 12 SEP 2017 6:04PM by PIB Bengaluru

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Your Excellency President Alexander Lukashenku

**Friends,
Members of the media**

I am delighted to welcome President Lukashenku to India. His visit comes as both countries mark 25 years of our diplomatic relationship this year.

We have earlier had the pleasure of receiving President Lukashenku in India in 1997 and in 2007. During this visit, I hope Your Excellency will get a chance to see and experience the transformations taking place in India.

Our discussions today were wide-ranging and forward-looking. They were marked by the warmth of our ties over two and a half decades. We exchanged views on bilateral issues and on regional and global developments. We reviewed the architecture of our partnership. We considered ideas and initiatives for further expanding it. We decided to enhance our interaction in all aspects of cooperation.

I found in President Lukashenku matching enthusiasm and desire to scale up our partnership for the benefit of our people.

To this end, we will work to diversify economic linkages. The focus will be to build upon the natural complementarity between us.

Our companies have to evolve from a buyer-seller framework to deeper engagement. There are abundant business and investment opportunities in pharmaceuticals, oil & gas, heavy machinery and equipment. Last year, Indian companies made a positive beginning with three joint ventures in pharmaceuticals.

Possibilities for partnership also exist in manufacturing of tyres, agro-industrial machinery, and mining equipment. Similarly, in heavy-duty construction machinery India has a growing demand and Belarus has industrial strengths.

We will also encourage joint development and manufacturing in defence sector under the Make in India programme. We have also progressed our discussion on utilising the US\$ 100 million line of credit that India had offered in 2015 in specific projects in Belarus.

India is linked with Belarus under multilateral economic initiatives such as the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the International North South Transport Corridor. India is negotiating a Free Trade Agreement with the EEU.

Friends,

Science and technology is another area of focus for stronger cooperation. Belarus is a long-time partner in this field.

Innovation and commercialisation will be given due emphasis in fields like metallurgy & materials, nano-materials, biological & medical sciences, and chemical & engineering sciences. We envisage participation of our youth in this process.

We are exploring the setting up of a technology demonstration Centre in India to showcase Belarusian technology.

Another dimension of India's partnership with Belarus lies in development cooperation. Belarus is an active participant in Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation programme.

In international forums, our two countries have close cooperation and common approaches on matters of mutual interest.

India and Belarus will continue extending mutual support for each other in multilateral fora.

Friends,

President Lukashenku and I discussed the rich history of cultural interactions between our people, which has nurtured goodwill. I was pleased to learn that many Belarusians take active interest in Indian culture, cuisine, films, music, dance, Yoga and Ayurveda.

I see great potential to enhance our tourism and people-to-people exchanges so as to build an even stronger foundation for our relations.

In closing, I want to thank President Lukashenku for being our honoured guest. India will work closely with Belarus in the coming days and months to implement today's consensus and outcomes. I wish President Lukashenku a memorable stay in India.

I thank you.

(Release ID: 1502627) Visitor Counter : 59

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