

MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON HIS VISIT TO THE CZECH REPUBLIC

Prague, September 7, 2018

1. I am delighted to pay a State Visit to the Czech Republic. I express my heartfelt gratitude to President Zeman and to the people of the Czech Republic for their special warmth and generous hospitality.
2. India and the Czech Republic share historical, warm and friendly relations. My State Visit is aimed at deepening our economic relations spread over trade, technology and investment collaboration. In our discussions, President Zeman and I, reviewed progress in our bilateral relations and discussed the roadmap for the future.
3. India values the Czech Republic as an important trade, technology and investment partner. The Czech strengths in manufacturing and advanced technology make it a natural fit to partner Indian growth and next-generation development. We are pleased that Czech major Skoda Auto and its parent company Volkswagen have

announced plans to invest US \$ 1 billion in India under the 'Make in India' initiative.

4. Our annual bilateral trade is a little over US \$1 billion. Given the economic strengths of the two countries, this is way below potential. President Zeman and I committed today to write a new chapter in our trading relations. The India-Czech Joint Economic Commission meeting to be held next month at the Ministerial level, will deliberate in detail and take steps to enhance trade and investment cooperation and diversify our partnership into new areas.
5. I sense high enthusiasm in the business community on both sides to engage and build robust partnerships in sectors such as defence, high-tech manufacturing, heavy engineering, automotive industry and civil aviation. I am glad that large number of business personnel from India and the Czech Republic have gathered for the India - Czech Business Forum that I will address later today. I am confident that this business interaction will result in new business tie-ups, building on each other's expertise and requirements.

6. President Zeman and I took stock of our ongoing defence co-operation. There is immense potential for India-Czech defence collaboration to meet the growing requirements of the Indian defence industry. I invite Czech defence company to take advantage of the opening of defence manufacturing sector in India and set-up joint ventures in India both to produce for the domestic market and for rest of the world.
7. I thank the Czech side for recognizing the need to enhance the mobility of Indian professionals and students into the Czech Republic to upscale economic partnership. We look forward to the launch of Special Procedures for Highly Qualified Employees meant for India in October 2018.
8. Today, we have finalised 5 MOUs including between the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, India and the Czech Academy of Sciences; on Work Plan for support of Indo-Czech projects in diverse areas of science and technology; on Visa Waiver agreement for Diplomatic Passport holders and between ELI Beamlines and

Tata Institute of Fundamental Research in the field of Laser Technology. In addition, we also look forward to initiating co-operation for peaceful use of nuclear energy between the Global Centre for Nuclear Energy Partnership, India and a relevant institution on the Czech side. These agreements would step-up our ongoing research and innovation partnership.

9. President Zeman and I shared our concerns on global and regional challenges. We emphasized the importance of cooperation on defence and security. We committed to fight terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. I thank President Zeman for his express support for an early adoption of Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism at the UN.
10. We also agreed to further deepen our multi-lateral partnership. I thank the Czech side for supporting India's claim for a permanent seat in the UN Security Council and its membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group.
11. The ethos and values bestowed upon our two peoples, by virtue of our rich cultures and

time-tested bonds of friendship, make us natural partners, to work together for a world order, which is equitable, just and free.

12. I would once again like to thank President Zeman for his gracious invitation. I look forward to working with him to step-up, scale-up and substantially upgrade India-Czech relations.

Thank you!