

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND AT  
THE BANQUET HOSTED IN HONOUR OF THE PRESIDENT OF  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN, DR HASSAN ROUHANI**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, February 17, 2018

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you and your delegation Mr. President. ख़ोश ओमदीद जनाब आगाई दोकतोर रौहानी आजीज़.

This is your first State Visit to India. It marks as an important step forward in our growing bilateral ties. We are truly honoured to have you with us.

**Excellency**, India and Iran are age-old friends. Our togetherness has been nurtured by our civilizational ties. We have interacted, embraced and enriched each other in all aspects of life and culture. Our great poet Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore had described Persia as an everlasting inspiration. The thought and wisdom of great Persian luminaries - Sa'di the Master, and Hafiz - deeply moved him. In a letter to a friend, Tagore wrote, and I quote:

*Culturally speaking, Persia comes nearer to us than most Asian countries. In language, religion, literature and arts, we have very real affinity and all through the course of past history, communication of the mind has been constant. Unquote.*

Tagore described Indo-Iranian people as 'one' who like a giant river got divided into two streams, one finding its destination to the west of Hindukush and other pouring into the plains of India.

**Excellency**, on these strong and deep-rooted cultural links, we have built a modern partnership.

Our Prime Minister paid a landmark visit to your beautiful country in May of 2016. Building on it, your State Visit will stand as yet another shining milestone in our bilateral journey. Today, we have agreed to further expand and deepen our strategic partnership. In this endeavor, we are truly grateful for your leadership and personal commitment to India-Iran relations.

I am happy that our relationship is growing in all spheres. Our bilateral trade has expanded. Our energy partnership is growing. Iran's abundant hydrocarbon resources and India's rapidly growing energy demand, provide new opportunities for complementary engagement.

**Excellency**, we have stood by Iran during difficult times; and we will continue to support and stand by you in the future. There is strong willingness in our two countries to lift our relations to a higher level. As the saying goes, *वक्ति इरादे वजूद दोराद, राहे वजूद दोराद* - meaning, where there is a will, there is a way. Let us walk the path together.

Iran has played an important role in connecting peoples, cultures and civilizations for centuries. In contemporary times, it has the potential to yet again emerge as the hub in the region. In this context, the Chabahar Port, the Ashgabat Agreement and the International North-South Transport Corridor together would open immense opportunities for development and prosperity, not just in Iran, India and Afghanistan, but way beyond in the

larger region. ***These would directly impact the welfare of common people as we have recently seen with the wheat shipment sent to Afghanistan.***

As developing nations facing similar challenges, India and Iran have much to share and gain from each other. Our young people are our biggest strength. They are brimming with ideas, energy and entrepreneurship. We need to bring them together.

**Excellency**, both our countries have shared interest in peace, stability and security in the region. ***Terrorism poses a constant and daily challenge to our peace loving society. Our people have been suffering its violent and inhuman brutality.*** Let us join hands, firmly and decisively, to defeat these forces.

**Excellency**, we wish you good health and pray for continued progress and prosperity of the friendly people of Iran. दोस्ती –ए- ईरान वा हिन्द अज़ कादीम बुदे हस्त वा खोहद-मंद - meaning Iran and India are very old friends and we wish to remain so ever.

Thank you.

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