



H.E. AHMAD JAVED
AMBASSADOR OF INDIA TO THE KINGDOM OF SAUDI ARABIA

Ambassador's Message **on the occasion of the Republic Day of India**

On the joyous occasion of the 68th Republic Day of India, I have the pleasure to extend my warm greetings and felicitations to all my fellow countrymen in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

On this auspicious day, the Constitution of modern India came into force in 1950. The Constitution established the principles and structure of India's polity as a Socialist Secular Democratic Republic. As a charter of the basic rights and responsibilities of the citizens, it enjoins on every citizen to 'abide by the Constitution and respect its ideals and institutions. Our founding fathers saw the Constitution as an instrument of nation building for our country's multi-ethnic, multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious society, ensuring justice, liberty, equality and fraternity to the nation. These noble and everlasting values of our Constitution have, over the years, earned a revered place for us among the nations.

India has today emerged as a land of immense opportunities. For the last couple of years, India is heralding into a new era; implementing radical economic reforms towards ease of doing business, and introducing investor-

friendly changes in its FDI policy. India has brought in many major flagship initiatives like Make in India, Digital India, Skilled India Mission, Swatchh Bharat, Smart Cities, among others offering a whole lot of opportunities to foreign investors. The Parliament has recently passed the Goods & Services Tax (GST) bill which is expected to come into reality during the current year and would pave the way for a catalyst change in the Indian economy. Encouraged by the success of these initiatives, and in order to enhance transparency and curb the rampant corruption, the Government has demonetized high denomination currency notes and is encouraging the digital payments in big way.

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is an important part of our extended neighborhood. The people of Indian sub-continent and Arabian Peninsula have been interacting with each other through trade and commerce dating back to several millennia, fulfilling each others' necessities and requirements. The commonalities, inter alia, in our culture & tradition bear testimony to this historic relationship.

In recent times, the establishment of the diplomatic relations between India and Saudi Arabia and the subsequent high level bilateral exchanges on regular basis, have laid a solid foundation for successful transformation of bilateral relations in the fields of political, economic, security, defence, labour and people to people exchanges. The recent visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Riyadh in April 2016 is seen as a turning point in our growing strategic engagement with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Today, the two countries have established institutionalized mechanism of cooperation and made significant progress in the areas of mutual interests. Saudi Arabia is India's 4th largest trading partner. The import of crude oil by India forms a major component of bilateral trade with Saudi Arabia being India's largest supplier of crude oil, accounting for almost one-fifth of its needs. A number of Indian companies have been awarded major projects in the Kingdom. The two sides have been exchanging business delegations to promote bilateral trade. In coming months we will witness further efforts and exchanges to strengthen our economic and commercial relationship which forms intrinsic part of our strategic partnership. India has been a partner in the growth and development of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and is ready to offer its whole-hearted support towards achieving the goals of the Kingdom's "Vision 2030".

The two Holy cities of Makkah and Madinah have been the Pilgrimage Centres for our Muslim brothers and sisters from India. We appreciate the wonderful arrangements made by the Saudi authorities to ensure the safety, security and comfort of the Indian pilgrims of Hajj and Umrah. On this occasion, I would like to express my thanks and gratitude to the Saudi leadership for raising the Hajj quota of the India upto 170,025 pilgrims this year.

Saudi Arabia is host of over 3 million-strong Indian community, the largest expatriate community in the Kingdom. It is a matter of satisfaction that the Indians here are considered the 'most preferred community' due to their hard work, expertise, sense of discipline, law abiding and peace loving nature. The contribution made by Indian community to the development of Saudi Arabia is well acknowledged. In the year 2014, India and Saudi Arabia signed a Labour Agreement to regulate the working conditions of domestic workers. In April 2016, the two sides concluded an Agreement to regulate the working conditions of workers working in other than domestic sector. I am grateful to the Saudi leadership for their overwhelming support in redressing the grievances of the Indian workers and repatriating them to their homeland whenever needed.

On this joyous occasion, I would also like to express my best wishes for the continued good health and prosperity of the Custodian of The Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, and the friendly people of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

I take this opportunity, once again, to greet my fellow citizens in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on this occasion of the 68th Republic Day of India.

(Ahmad Javed)