

Interview of Ambassador of India
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QUESTION 1: Your Excellency Ambassador, we would like to know your opinion about Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to India on December 11 and your assessment of the outcome of the visit. You were among those who welcomed the Russian President in New Delhi and who came to see off him.

ANSWER: The visit of the President of the Russian Federation to India last week was a significant event in our bilateral relations. It was the first Annual Summit between the leaders after the new government came into office in India. It gave our two leaders the opportunity to evaluate the current status of our special and privileged strategic partnership and to set out a focused agenda for action in the diverse areas of our cooperation. This can be seen in the joint statement that articulates the vision of the two leaders for strengthening our bilateral partnership over the next decade.

QUESTION 2: For India, what are the most significant documents signed in Delhi and in view of this, what are the plans set by India before the country?

ANSWER: Besides the important Joint Statement, seven documents were signed at the inter-governmental level and a further 13 commercial contracts were concluded on the sidelines of the visit. In addition to these, valuable contacts were established between governmental agencies and business entities of the two sides that will lead to further bilateral agreements and contracts. All these are of great importance. Initiatives to impart fresh impetus to our cooperation in space,

fast-tracking nuclear energy cooperation, measures to create more conducive conditions for bilateral trade and investments, bilateral initiatives to facilitate increasing direct diamond trade and enhanced cooperation in the field of oil and gas between the two countries are also important outcomes of the visit.

QUESTION 3: I have gone through the coverage of the visit by the Indian press which as a whole assesses the visit positively. However, some publications have expressed the opinion that Indo-Russian relations have no previous shine and significance and they will have to withstand an endurance test in the light of the forthcoming visit to India of US President Barack Obama in January. What is your opinion about this assessment?

ANSWER: India-Russia relations have withstood many stringent endurance tests during the Cold War and beyond. They have emerged from each test with their shine intact. If you see our PM's public statement at the joint media interaction with President Putin, it would be clear that there is no ambiguity in India's perspectives on the relationship. Our PM has said clearly that our strategic partnership is incomparable in content; even as global politics and international relations are changing, the importance of the India-Russia relationship and its unique place in India's foreign policy will not change. Even as India's options have increased today, Russia will remain our most important defence partner. It is a key partner in India's quest for energy security, both through collaborations in generation of nuclear energy and with an ambitious agenda for partnership in the hydrocarbons sector. The priority for our cooperation include combatting terrorism and extremism, advancing peace and stability in Afghanistan and working together to promote a polycentric democratic world order based on

shared interests of our countries. It is clear from this that we see a continuity and, in fact, an increasing vibrancy in our bilateral relations into the future.

QUESTION 4: During the Russian President's visit, the two sides set the task of increasing the volume of trade between the two countries up to \$ 30 billion by 2015. How will they achieve this goal?

ANSWER: During the recent visit the two leaders agreed that in today's world vibrant economic relations constitute a key pillar of a strong strategic partnership. They agreed that we need to encourage significantly higher flows of goods, services and investments between the two countries. With this objective our two countries are close to finalizing modalities for conducting bilateral trade in our national currencies and for creating fast-track customs clearance procedures. Our dialogue with the Eurasian Economic Union for closer engagement between India and the EaEu will also lead to a favourable impact on India-Russia economic collaboration. The bilateral investment funds which were agreed on during the Summit will give impetus to the flow of investments in both directions. We are looking at Indian investments in fertilizers, coal, pharmaceuticals and engineering in Russia and encouraging Russian investments in a number of civilian and defence sectors under our 'Make in India' initiative and large-scale infrastructure projects. We hope the bilateral diamond trade will pick up momentum. Our increasing collaboration in nuclear energy and hydrocarbons should also boost our economic interactions. In short, if we follow up assiduously on the agreements and understandings reached at the Summit, we should be able to achieve the targets for trade and investments set by our two leaders in the joint statement.

QUESTION 5: Both the Indian Ambassador to Russia and the Russian Ambassador to India could be described as the steersmen who direct the ships of bilateral cooperation in their harbours in line with the roadmap adopted by the leaders of the two countries. Your Excellency Ambassador, what are the steps you have planned for the implementation of the signed documents in the near future? What are the important events in Indo-Russian cooperation that have been outlined in the forthcoming months of the New Year?

ANSWER: Both the Embassies and governments of the two countries have been given a substantive agenda for action by our leaders. It is our responsibility to progress this agenda. The practice of Annual Summits as well as the fact that our leaders also regularly meet at different multilateral events, provide the impulse for us to retain our focus on implementation of bilateral initiatives. A number of institutional mechanisms provide the framework in which the bilateral agenda is pursued purposefully. Even today discussions are being conducted in Moscow on a revised Bilateral Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (BIPPA). We will have other bilateral meetings on civil and defence cooperation commencing from the beginning of the new year in January and leading through to the Annual Summit in the latter half of 2015. In 2015, we will also hold a Festival of Indian Culture in Russia. I am confident that we will achieve the goals that have been set for us.
