

## Independence Day Celebrations

Riga, Latvia

15 August 2023

### Remarks

**Ambassador Tanmaya Lal**

- Namaskar
- **Greetings** to all of you on the 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's Independence Day
- My thanks to the organisers of this special event. The **PIO Chamber of Commerce & Industry**.
- India is a **nation rooted in one of the oldest civilizations** and is defined by its **democracy** and **great diversity** among its people who represent **one sixth of the entire humanity**.
- There is a **fundamental unity** despite our megadiversity of languages, faiths, ethnicities, and arts & cultures.
- Indian civilization is the origin for many of the world's faiths and for sophistication in **philosophical thought, scientific and academic accomplishments** and highly **evolved cultural heritage**.
- From **Yoga** and **Ayurveda** to concept of **Zero** to advances in **mathematics, calculus, astronomy, metallurgy, surgery, ship building** to **urban planning, water harvesting** and remarkable **architecture**.
- Indian **cultural imprint** is visible in a number of countries in our region.
- India was among the **leading economies not so long ago** accounting for nearly a quarter of global economic output. The **colonial phase** disrupted societal and economic structures.
- Independence was won after a **long hard, largely non-violent peoples' struggle**. Freedom came at a huge cost. A **traumatic partition and massive forced migration**. As an independent nation, India started from a very difficult situation.
- We have come a **long way** since our independence.
- And now as we have entered **Amrit Kaal**, the pace of change is **exponential**.

- Despite global headwinds, India has emerged as the **fifth largest economy** and the **fastest growing** large economy of the world. It is estimated that as much as 14% of global growth in the next five years will come from India. India is on way to becoming third largest global economy in absolute terms.
- The **scale and speed of transformation** that is underway in India - in **Digital** sphere, in **Green** transition, **manufacturing** and **infrastructure** - offer unprecedented opportunities of collaboration with our partners.
- India's **talent pool** is also **unmatched** in its importance for global economy.
- India's **role and capabilities** in collectively addressing **global challenges** whether it is climate change or global health or peace & security are also growing significantly.
- India has now the **third largest startup ecosystem** in the world and the global leader in **digital payments**.
- More than **11,000 km of highways** are being built or expanded every year. **4,500 km of new railway tracks** have been built in the last one year alone. **6,000 route km of railways have been electrified** in the last two years.
- Number of **airports** has doubled to around 150 in the last few years. Several airports now run on **solar power**. By 2030 around 13 million **electric vehicles** will be sold annually in India.
- **Startups** are making advanced drones, working on AI & robotics and even launching rockets and satellites.
- And our third mission to the moon **Chandrayaan-3** is now orbiting the moon. An Indian **human space mission** is on the cards soon.
- India and Latvia are good friends. The peoples of our countries share civilizational bonds, as expressed in similarities in **Latvian and Sanskrit languages**.
- **Our partnership is growing steadily.**
- **Over the last year**, there have been several high-level engagements between India and Latvia.
- **H.E. Edgars Rinkēvičs**, then Foreign Minister met our External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar in Stockholm on the sidelines of the EU-Indo Pacific Ministerial meeting shortly before he took office as the President.
- **State Secretary Andris Pelšs** and then **Parliamentary State Secretary Ms. Gunda Reire**, now the Head of Office of the President, have visited India in recent months.

- I have also had discussions with colleagues in Latvian Foreign Office on exploring new areas of collaboration.
- Some of you would be aware of the wonderful **exhibition of Indian art** collection at the Art Museum Riga Bourse in January this year. It is the largest India collection in the Baltics.
- It was also good to have eminent scholar **Dr. Sigma Ankrava** releasing her Latvian translation of the ancient Indian epic Ramayana on that occasion.
- We had excellent interaction with some of the Latvian experts from different fields who have attended **ITEC** programmes in India over the last several years.
- The **International Day of Yoga** was organised in Riga in June this year at the University of Latvia.
- The **Ayurveda Chair** at the University of Latvia is another important initiative by both our governments.
- These are **difficult and uncertain times**.
- At this challenging time, India is leading the **G20** deliberations this year. India is helping push issues of wider concern, especially among developing countries such as debt crisis, food, fuel, fertilizer security on the global agenda.
- Our engagement with Latvia has a **strong EU context also**. An India EU Trade and Technology Council has been launched. Negotiations are underway to finalize India-EU Trade and Investment Agreements.
- Latvia is the Coordinating Country for the **NB8 grouping** this year that brings together Nordic and Baltic countries. India is becoming actively engaged with NB8 both on political and business agendas.
- In addition to Yoga, one of the important global initiatives taken by India has been the focus on millets as climate-smart super food in time of food insecurity. The United Nations is marking this year as the **International Year of Millets**.
- Last October, Prime Minister Modi and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres jointly launched **Mission LiFE**, which focusses on encouraging all of us to adopt lifestyles which are environmentally sustainable.
- These efforts are in addition to initiatives such as **International Solar Alliance** and the **Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure**.

- The **Indian Diaspora abroad are Ambassadors** for India. This includes all of you whether you are businesspersons, professionals or students or researchers.
- You represent India's **diversity, strength and dynamism**.
- We greatly **value your contribution** not only to the society and economy of your host country but also in **building bridges of friendship** at people-to-people level.
- May I conclude by greeting you again on this 76<sup>th</sup> anniversary of India's independence.
- Thank you
- Jai Hind.