

**Remarks by Ambassador at the
Republic Day Reception (26 January 2017)**

Today on the occasion of India's Republic Day, I wish to convey the felicitations of the people of India to the people of Tunisia and thank the people of Tunisia and the Government of Tunisia for their best wishes. This was the day in 1950, the Constitution of India was adopted and India's march towards people's democracy began. Coinciding with this occasion, I reciprocate on my behalf and on behalf of the people of India, the best wishes to the people of Tunisia. I congratulate the people of Tunisia and the Government of Tunisia for the successful transformation of Tunisia into a vibrant multi-party democracy and our good wishes for its continued success.

The strong edifice of democracy built by our founding fathers is on the four pillars of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity.

India is a very ancient nation. We have a history of thousands of years and our cultural heritage is also millennia old. A country having more than hundred languages, hundreds of dialects, innumerable attires, innumerable life styles, despite that this country remained united, its main reason is our cultural heritage.

We have to create a future which will economically empower six hundred million youth, build a digital India, a start-up India, and a skilled India. As we build an India of hundreds of smart cities, towns and villages, we must ensure that they are humane, hi-tech and happy places leading to the creation of a technology-driven but compassionate society. We have to promote and reinforce a scientific temper.

India's focus in foreign policy will remain on peaceful co-existence and harnessing technology and resources for its economic development.

We have reinvigorated our historic bonds of friendship with traditional partners of the Arab World and Africa. Tunisia remains our strong partner and a reliable friend.

We are forging a relationship based on shared values and mutual benefit with Tunisia. We must also have exchanges between the legislatures of our two countries, one a new and successful democracy and the other the largest democracy in the world.

The year 2016 was a watershed in bilateral relations between India and Tunisia. The visit of Vice President of India was a landmark visit which took place after three decades. Our discussions focussed on our ongoing economic partnership and on incorporating newer areas of collaboration in Information Technology, Education and capacity building.

The spreading tide of extremism and terrorism is a threat we both face. Successfully dealing with such threats requires strong cooperation among like-minded partners.

Several cultural and business missions visited Tunisia last year.

It is a matter of satisfaction that our business communities are deeply interested to establish business partnerships with each other.

I take this opportunity to thank Zouari group for sponsoring the event and we hope Indian Mahindra cars and vehicles will grow manifold in Tunisia in the near future.

There is great scope for improved trade relations between our two countries. On my part, I am working towards deepening the trade and economic ties to the mutual benefit of our two peoples. There is potential to increase the bilateral trade turnover significantly.

With regard to foreign direct investment, our country happens to be the most favourite destination in the world today. India is currently the fastest-growing large economy in the world with a growth rate of GDP of 7% in the current fiscal year.

I would like to see Tunisia and Tunisian entrepreneurs also take advantage of the growth opportunity that India represents.

Some new initiatives like 'Make in India' which provide incentives to encourage large-scale manufacturing in the country have contributed to foreign investment inflow and to generation of jobs within the country.

We train about 100 Tunisian citizens for training in our institutions in different streams as our guests every year.

Historical ties, cultural bonds and shared interests characterize our relations with Tunisia. We have a vital stake in the stability, security and economic wellbeing of this country. I see a prosperous and peaceful future as our bilateral interactions deepen. It will open a new era of peace and prosperity for our two countries and the entire region.

Long live India! Long live Tunisia!

Long live India-Tunisia friendship.