

Text of 37th Singapore Lecture 'India's Singapore Story' by Prime Minister during his visit to Singapore

**Press Information Bureau
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**Excellency, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong
Excellency, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam
Honourable Ministers,
Professor Tan Tai Yong,
Distinguished guests,**

Thank you for the honour and privilege of delivering the Singapore Lecture.

I am conscious that I walk in the footsteps of leaders who have shaped modern India and our relationship with this region –President Shri APJ Abdul Kalam, Prime Minister Shri P.V. Narsimha Rao, and former Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee.

Mr. Prime Minister, I am deeply honoured that you have joined us here.

We have been on the road together in the past few weeks – for the G20 and the ASEAN and East Asia Summits.

This tells you how deeply linked the destinies of our two nations are .

To the people of Singapore, on 50 years of Independence, I extend the greetings and the good wishes of 1.25 billion friends and admirers.

In the life of humans and nations, milestones of time are natural.

But, few countries can celebrate the first fifty years of existence with a sense of pride and satisfaction that Singapore deserves to.

And, I can do no better than to begin with homage to one of the tallest leaders of our time and the architect of modern Singapore – Lee Kuan Yew.

To capture his mission in own words, he gave his life to see a successful Singapore.

And, it was with his well known steely determination that he saw Singapore through to its golden jubilee year.

His impact was global. And, in him, India had a well wisher, who spoke with the honesty of true friendship. He believed in India's potential at home and her role abroad more than many in India.

For me, he was a personal inspiration. From his Singapore Stories, I drew many lessons.

The most profound, yet simple, idea was that transformation of a nation begins with a change in the way we are. And, that it was as important to keep your city and surroundings clean as it was to build modern infrastructure.

For me, too, in India, the Swachh Bharat campaign, is not just a programme to clean our environment, but to transform the way we think, live and work.

For quality, efficiency, and productivity are not just technical measures, but also a state of mind and a way of life.

So, in my visit to Singapore this March and in the observance of a day's mourning in India, we wanted to honour a true friend and a very special relationship.

Singapore is a nation that has become a metaphor for the reality of dreams.

Singapore teaches us many things.

The size of a nation is no barrier to the scale of its achievements.

And, the lack of resources is no constraint for inspiration, imagination, and innovation.

When a nation embraces diversity, it can unite behind a common purpose.

And, international leadership flows from the power of thought, not just from the orthodox measures of strength.

Singapore has done more than just lift a nation into the highest levels of prosperity within a generation.

It has inspired this region's progress and led in its integration.

And, it has made others believe that the possibility of progress is within our horizons, not an unseen and distant hope.

Singapore's success flows not from the aggregate of numbers and the size of investments.

It is based on what I believe is the key to success: the quality of human resources, the belief of a people and the resolve of a nation.

Distinguished members of the audience,

It is with the same vision that we are pursuing the transformation of India.

People are the purpose of our efforts; and, they will be the power behind change.

I do not judge the success of our efforts from the cold statistics of number, but from the warm glow of smile on human faces.

So, one set of our policies are to empower our people.

The other set to create the conditions in which enterprise flourishes, opportunities expand and the potential of our citizens are unlocked.

So, we are investing in our people through skills and education; special focus on the girl child; financial inclusion; sustainable habitats; clean rivers and smart cities; and, access to basic needs of all our citizens – from water and sanitation to power and housing.

We will nurture and defend an environment in which every citizen belongs and participates, secure of her rights and confident about her opportunities.

And, we are creating opportunities by reforming our laws, regulations, policies, processes and institutions; by the way we govern ourselves; and the way we work with state governments.

Together with this software of change, we are also building the hardware of progress – next generation infrastructure, revived manufacturing, improved agriculture, easier trade and smarter services.

That is why we are moving on many fronts at the same time, aware of the linkages that make up a comprehensive strategy.

I learnt long ago that Singaporeans are too well informed about India to be burdened with numbers by a visitor, even from India.

In any case, for me, the emergence of India as the fastest growing major economy in the world is less important than what is more enduring: the wheels of change are moving; confidence is growing; resolve is stronger; and, the direction is clearer.

And, it is spreading across the nation, as the most distant village and the farthest citizen begin to join the mainstream of national economy.

Distinguished guests,

India and Singapore have been together at many crossroads of time.

Our relationship is written in the pages of history, the footprints of culture, the ties of kinship and the old connection of commerce.

We stood together in friendship at the dawn of freedom; and, we reached out to each other in a partnership of shared hopes.

Singapore's success became an aspiration of Indians. And, in turn, India became the hope for a more peaceful, balanced and stable world.

As India opened itself, Singapore became India's springboard to the world and gateway to the East.

No one worked harder for it and no one deserves more credit for it than Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong. He re-connected India to Singapore and the region.

He also opened my eyes to its vast prospects.

Today, Singapore is one of our most important partners in the world. It is a relationship that is as strategic as it is wide-ranging.

We have comprehensive defence and security relations. It flows out of shared interests and a common vision. Singapore holds regular exercises with and in India.

Singapore is the biggest investment source and destination for India in the world; the world's most connected nation to India; the largest trading partner in Southeast Asia; and, a popular destination for tourists and students.

Now, as we build the India of our dreams, Singapore is already a major partner in that enterprise: world class human resources, smart cities, clean rivers, clean energy, or next generation sustainable infrastructure.

Starting from the first IT Park in Bengaluru, it now includes the newest state capital in India, Amravati in Andhra Pradesh.

Our partnership will expand as our economies grow and the framework of trade and investment improves further.

But, I have always seen Singapore in loftier terms.

Singapore's success in overcoming odds leads me to seek a partnership that addresses the challenges of 21st century – from food and water to clean energy and sustainable habitats.

And, in many ways, Singapore will also influence the course of our region in this century.

Mr. Prime Minister, Distinguished members,

This area covers the arc of Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean Regions. However we choose to define it, the underlining theme of connected histories and interconnected destinies stand out clearly.

This is a region of expanding freedom and prosperity. It is home to two of the most populous nations; some of the world's largest economies; and, the world's most talented and hard working people.

Asia's re-emergence is the greatest phenomenon of our era.

From the darkness of the middle of the last century, Japan led Asia's rise. It then extended to Southeast Asia, Korea and China.

And, India is now the bright hope for sustaining Asian dynamism and prosperity.

But, this is also a region with many unsettled questions and unresolved disputes; of competing claims and contested norms; of expanding military power and extending shadow of terrorism; and, uncertainties on seas and vulnerability in cyber space.

The region is not an island in a vast ocean, but deeply connected and influenced by the world beyond.

We are also a region of disparities within and between states; where the challenges of habitats, food and water remain; where our gifts of Nature and wealth of traditions feel the pressure of rapid progress; and, our agriculture and islands are threatened by climate change.

Asia has seen some of this at different points of its history. But, it has probably never been here before. And, Asia is still finding a path through its multiple transitions to a peaceful, stable and prosperous future.

It is a journey that must succeed.

And, Singapore and India must work together to realize it.

India's history has been inseparable from Asia.

There were times when we turned inwards.

And now, as we reintegrate more closely with Asia, we are returning to history. We are retracing our ancient maritime and land routes with the natural instincts of an ancient relationship.

And, in the course of last eighteen months, my government has engaged more with this region than any other in the world.

From a new opening with Pacific Island Nations, Australia and Mongolia to more intense engagement with China, Japan, Korea and ASEAN members, we have pursued our vision with purpose and vigour.

India and China share a boundary and five millennia of continuous engagement. Monks and merchants have nurtured our ties and enriched our societies.

It's a history reflected in the seventh century journey of XuanZang that I have had the privilege of connecting, from my birthplace in Gujarat to Xian in China, where President Xi hosted me this May.

We see it in religious texts written in Sanskrit, Pali, and Chinese; in the letters of the past, exchanged with warmth and grace; in India's famous tanchoi sarees; and, in Cinapatta, the Sanskrit name for silk.

Today, we constitute two-fifth of humanity and two of the world's fastest growing major economies. China's economic transformation is an inspiration for us.

And, as it rebalances its economy, and as India steps up the pace of its growth, we can both reinforce each other's progress. And, we can advance stability and prosperity in our region.

And, together, we can be more effective in addressing our common global challenges, from trade to climate change.

We have our unresolved issues, including our boundary question, but we have been able to keep our border region peaceful and stable. And, we have agreed to strengthen strategic communication and expand convergences. We explore shared economic opportunities while addressing common threats like terrorism.

India and China will engage constructively across the complexity of their relationship as two self-assured and confident nations, aware of their interests and responsibilities.

Just as China's rise has driven the global economy, the world looks to China to help advance global and regional peace and stability.

India and Japan may have discovered each other somewhat later. But, my friend, Prime Minister Abe, showed me in the magnificent shrines of Kyoto the symbols of our much longer spiritual engagement.

And, more than a hundred years ago , as Swami Vivekananda reached the shores of Japan, he exhorted the Indian youth to go east to Japan.

Independent India took that advice seriously. There are few partnerships that enjoy so much goodwill in India as our relations with Japan.

No nation has contributed so much to India's modernization and progress Japan – cars, metros and industrial parks, for example. And, no partner is likely to play as big a role in India's transformation as Japan.

We do more together now. We see this as a strategic partnership that is vital for securing a peaceful and stable Asia, Pacific and Indian Ocean Regions.

With Korea and Australia, our relationships started with strong economic foundations, and have become strategic in content.

And, ASEAN is the anchor of our Act East Policy. We are linked by geography and history, united against many common challenges and bound by many shared aspirations.

With each ASEAN member, we have deepening political, security, defence and economic ties. And, as ASEAN Community leads the way to regional integration, we look forward to a more dynamic partnership between India and ASEAN that holds rich potential for our 1.9 billion people.

With almost the entire region, India has frameworks of economic cooperation. We want to be more deeply integrated with the regional economy. And, we will upgrade our partnership agreements and work for an early conclusion of Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement.

In the flux and transition of our times, the most critical need in this region is to uphold and strengthen the rules and norms that must define our collective behavior.

This is why we must all come together, in East Asia Summit and other forums, to build a cooperative and collaborative future, not on the strength of a few, but on the consent of all.

India will work with countries in the region and beyond, including the United States and Russia, our East Asia Summit partners, to ensure that our commons - ocean, space and cyber – remain avenues of shared prosperity, not become new theatres of contests.

India will lend its strength to keep the seas safe, secure and free for the benefit of all.

This is an age of inter-dependence when nations must come together, to realize the promise of this century. We must also do so because our pressing challenges are not from one another, but common to each of us.

Terrorism is one such major global challenge, and a force larger than individual groups. its shadow stretches across our societies and our nations, both in recruitment and choice of targets. It does not just take a toll of lives, but can derail economies.

The world must speak in one voice and act in unison. There will be political, legal, military and intelligence efforts. But, we must do more.

Countries also must be held accountable for sanctuaries, support, arms and funds.

Nations must cooperate more with each other. Societies must reach out within and to each other. We must delink terrorism from religion, and assert the human values that define every faith.

We are a few days away from Paris, where we must achieve concrete outcome, in accordance with the principles of UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. This is especially important for our region, particularly the small island states.

Friends,

Ours is a region of enormous promise. But, we know that enduring peace and prosperity are not inevitable.

So, we must work hard to realize our vision of an Asian Century.

Asia has the wisdom of its ancient cultures and all the great religions of the world. It also has the energy and drive of youth.

As Asia's first Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore predicted on a visit to this region nearly a century ago, Asia is regaining its self-consciousness for realization of its own self.

Here in Singapore, where the region's currents merge; its diversity converges; ideas meet; and, aspirations gather wings, I feel that we are closer to that vision than ever before.

And as India pursues its transformation and strives for a peaceful and stable world, Singapore will be a major partner on that journey.

Thank you.

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