

**Speech Delivered by Ambassador Shamma Jain, at the 70<sup>th</sup>  
Republic Day, Athens, January 25, 2019**

Hon'ble Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs, H.E. Mr. Georgios Katrougalos

Secretary General, Mr. Ilias Xanthakis, representing the Hon'ble Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Economy and Development, H.E. Mr. Ioannis Dragasakis

H.E. Mr. Nikolaos Syrmalenios, Member of Parliament and Vice President of the Indo-Greek Parliamentary Friendship Group, representing Hon'ble President of the Hellenic Parliament, H.E. Mr. Nikolaos Voutsis,

H.E. Mr. Simos Kedikoglou, Member of Parliament, representing H.E. Mr. Kyriakos Mitsotakis, the Hon'ble Leader of Opposition and President of New Democracy.

H.E. Mr. Gerasimos Balaouras, Member of Parliament, SYRIZA

Major General Halakatevakis representing the Chief of Hellenic Army General Staff, Lieutenant General Alkiviadis Stefanis

Major General K. Arapis representing the Chief of the Hellenic Air Force General Staff, Lieutenant General Christos Christodoulou.

Vice Admiral Ioannis Pavlopoulos, Commander-in-Chief of Hellenic Fleet

Reverend Father, Anastasios Vlavianos representing His Beatitude, The Archbishop of Greece, Ieronymos 2<sup>nd</sup>.

Secretary Generals of Ministries

Excellencies

Distinguished Guests, Ladies & Gentlemen

1. Kalispera Saas, I welcome you all to the celebration of the 70<sup>th</sup> Republic Day of India this evening. India's independence on August 15, 1947 after nearly two centuries of colonization by the British, was followed by the framing and adoption of a new Constitution on January 26, 1950. It led to the birth of the Republic of India. The Constitution not only provided a legal framework for a new nation, but also a scripture for social transformation.

2. India, whose economy accounted for almost 27% of the world GDP in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and 23% in the 18<sup>th</sup>, was reduced to a poster child for third world poverty after two hundred years of colonization. Compared to 1947, the year of our independence, when 90 per cent of the population lived below poverty level, literacy rate was below 17 per cent and we depended heavily on imports from abroad for all basic goods and even food, India has today emerged as the world's fastest growing large economy. In a recent forecast by the Standard Chartered Plc., India will be the second largest economy by 2030, surpassing the US. While the outlook for the world economy is currently becoming dim, the World Bank prognosis for Indian growth rate in 2018-19 is 7.3 per cent. India a bright spot in the global economy, as IMF has remarked.
3. India and Greece, the two ancient civilizations which have contributed so much to human civilization, have bilateral political and economic relationship going back to 2,500 years. In India, there is evidence of Greek travelers, traders, scholars, warriors, interacting with our ancestors. How Alexander the Great went to India as an invader in 326 B.C, but left as a friend, is narrated in every school history book in India.
4. As an Ambassador, I find highly inspiring the exemplary contribution of the first Greek Ambassador to India, Megasthenes, sent to Indian Emperor Chandragupta's court in 4<sup>th</sup> century BC. Besides being a diplomat, Megasthenes was a scholar, historian and ethnographer. His travelogue "Indica" remains one of the best known accounts of ancient India.
5. From a fusion of Greek and Indian cultural influences, originated the Greco-Buddhist Art and the "Gandhara School of Art and Sculpture". Even the commercial capital of India, Mumbai, is indebted to the Greek geographer Ptolemy for mapping its seven islands, which he called "Heptanesia", the Greek term for seven islands.

6. Friends, more recently in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century India, there was a flourishing community of Greek businessmen, traders of spices, jute and other commodities. The Greek Orthodox Church in Kolkata still stands tall, with its imposing Doric columns.
7. Surpassing all these mutual bonds of interaction are the common values that India and Greece share, such as democracy, the rule of law, multi-culturalism, tolerance, and social harmony. These values are the cornerstone of India's relationship with Greece, as also the EU. In the strife-riven world of today, where the forces of violent extremism and terrorism are seeking to strike at the very foundation of our democratic societies, such commonality of values is significant.
8. While Greece is the cradle of democracy, India is home to the world's largest democracy. Indians and Greeks share an affinity for argument. Indians like Greeks, argue, discuss, and agree to disagree. The Indian political system is diverse and vibrant as that of Greece. This year is an election year for both the countries, except that 9.9 million people constitute the Greek electorate, and in India, 852 million voters will exercise their right to vote in May this year at 927,000 (nearly one million) polling stations across the country. If with only a few major political parties existing in Greece, there is intense political discourse, can you imagine the complexity of Indian political system with its 7 national and 24 regional parties? And that's one of the reasons why we Indians feel so much at home in Greece!
9. Is it any surprise that readers of the Indian travel magazine "Travel plus Leisure" voted Greece as the best heritage destination last year? The Indian tourist arrivals in Greece more than doubled to 38,000 from January to September last year. There is a huge untapped potential in this sector and we are jointly working to harness it.

10. India's economic buoyancy offers new opportunities not only for Greek companies to enter India's huge consumer market for their products, but also for closer business partnerships in priority sectors, such as: infrastructure, ports, shipping, high technology manufacturing, defense, pharmaceuticals, agriculture, renewable energy, and tourism, etc. Besides Bollywood has started capturing Greece's pristine beauty on the silver screen for its viewers across the globe. This new dynamic, boosted by Greece's recent incentives, can potentially lend a huge boost to our economic partnership. The opportunities for lucrative collaboration between India, the largest movie producer worldwide, and Greece should be harnessed.
11. The Greek company Chipita's joint venture with a major Indian confectionery company, Britannia Industries Ltd., and GEK Terna's joining hands with a leading Indian infrastructure enterprise, GMR and its subsidiary GMR Airports to build the Kastelli Airport in Crete, would hopefully pave the way for a wider partnership between Indian and Greek companies.
12. As some major economies are faced with declining population and shortage of skilled young workforce, India, driven by the power of its youth – with 65 per cent of India's population being under the age of 35 - enjoys the demographic dividend. Its young population is imbued with entrepreneurship and technological aptitude to connect, collaborate, and compete with the world. India, the second most populous country in the world, is poised to become the world's youngest country by 2020, with 65 per cent of our population being in the working age group.
13. The academic & scientific exchanges between India and Greece including those being fostered by the Foundation for Research and Technology-Hellas (FORTH) are mutually beneficial for bringing our young minds closer. India, with its third largest start-up base globally, is seeking to accelerate such technology and knowledge-based partnerships with the highly trained professionals in Greece.

14. India's successful and indigenously developed space program, pioneered by the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has end-to-end capabilities in space technology, making and launching its own rockets, its own satellites and a record of excellence in the area of application. With almost 4 dozen satellites in orbit, over 60 launches conducted from its own space port, ISRO has earned reputation globally as a reliable and inexpensive launcher. With its successful missions to the Moon in 2008, and to the Mars in 2014, ISRO went on to set a world record by launching a flock of 104 satellites, in a single flight, using its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle. The satellites were of international customers - US, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Israel, Kazakhstan and the UAE. Space cooperation can become a new facet of the expanding relations between India and Greece.
15. India's recent emergence as the world's 4<sup>th</sup> largest market for vehicle sales by volume, and poised to become the 3<sup>rd</sup> biggest market by 2021, epitomizes the attraction of the Indian market for foreign companies.
16. As the largest provider of generic drugs globally – catering to 40 per cent of US' generic drug demand, 25 per cent of all medicines in the UK, and over 50 per cent of global demand for various vaccines, and supplying over 80 per cent of the antiretroviral drugs used globally to combat AIDS - there is indeed potential for India and Greece working together in pharmaceutical sector.
17. India's strategic partnership with the European Union, hinged on common goals and principles particularly, in the challenging international environment of today contributes to consolidation of the bilateral ties between India and Greece. India's leap by 53 places since 2016, on the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index, demonstrates the rapid economic transformation taking place in India making the country not only an attractive consumer market for EU countries, but also a source of investments. Indian companies are significant investors in the EU, in industries as diverse as pharmaceuticals

- and automobile components. Indian investors are keen on exploring opportunities in Greece, particularly as in the post-memorandum period, business activity is picking up, and the current economic growth rate has spurred more confidence.
18. As Greece is a pillar of peace and stability in south Europe and in the larger neighborhood, India is an anchor of economic growth, and stability not only in South Asia but the wider Indo-Pacific region. India is committed to an international order marked by rules based multilateral institutions and multipolarity in international governance.
  19. Since my assumption of charge in Greece a year back, there has been a steady exchange of high level visits between our two countries. The visit of the President of India last year was a landmark development, reinvigorating our ties at the highest political level. The well-attended India-Greece Business Forum, organized by the Embassy at short notice during the visit, demonstrate the growing interest of the Greek business leaders to partner with India.
  20. The visit of our Minister of State for Agriculture to Greece last year, an upcoming important ministerial visit from India next month, and from the Greek side, the visits by the Secretary Generals of National Tourism, and of Infrastructure, Transport and Networks to India exemplify the new dynamics of our bilateral engagement.
  21. An Indian agricultural business delegation's visit in March will likely open up new trade opportunities for both sides across various sectors of agribusiness.
  22. Above all, India's participation as Honored Country in the 2019 Thessaloniki International Fair will help catalyze robust trade and investment ties between India and Greece, propelling our relationship to the next level.

Ladies & Gentlemen,

May I underline that the tradition of warmth, friendship, and hospitality of the Greek people is strikingly similar to Indian ethos and culture and, that, in my opinion, can be the abiding foundation of our deepening ties. When hearts meet, long-term business relationships, investments, and joint ventures are fostered with greater ease, marked by a distinct comfort level.

Thank you once again for your presence this evening

Efharisto` Poly`

Kali Diaskidasi