

REPUBLIC DAY, 2024

Distinguished guests,

H.E. Senator Uba Sani Executive Governor of Kaduna State represented by governors of Nasarawa, Zfara, Odin, Ogin, Enugu, Eliot, and Zamfara states

H.E Yusuf M. Tuggar, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nigeria ably represented by Ambassador Alex Kefas

H.E. Mrs Hannatu Musawa, Hon'ble Minister of art, culture and creative economy

H.E. Dr. Jamila Bio Ibrahim, Minister of Youth Development

H.E. Mrs Pauline Kedem Tallen, Former Minister of women affairs

Chief of protocol Amb. Zanna

Directors General of Federal Agencies of the Republic of Nigeria, respected members of the Military of Nigeria, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps in Nigeria, my colleague Ambassadors, High Commissioners and CdAs to Nigeria, members of the diplomatic corps, Defence Attaches, my fellow countrymen and my colleagues in the High Commission.

I welcome you all to the High Commission of India in Abuja to celebrate the 75th Republic Day of India. We are especially proud of the working of the Constitution adopted in 1950 that has further ensured the strength and vibrancy of democracy in India. Democracy is an age-old concept in India. As per the Indian ethos, democracy comprises the values of freedom, acceptability, equality, and inclusivity in a society and allow its common citizens to lead a quality and dignified life. Various ancient Indian texts stand testimony to this. The successful conduct of periodic elections and the steady growth of

voter turnout in each of these elections showcase the confidence in the system. In India, elections have come to be called a 'festival'.

From the end of the last century till now, India has been making rapid progress and is one of the faster growing emerging economies. Today with more than USD 3.7 Trillion GDP, her economy is the fifth largest in the world. Education, health and economy have been the consistent targets of successive governments in India that has resulted in all round improvement of the standard of living of Indian citizens. Today we run one of the world's largest health insurance schemes, made education as a fundamental right, continue with the biggest welfare initiative in providing food grains to a significant percentage of Indian citizens, increased the paying capacity of the people, provided equal opportunities to all, drawn up schemes to uplift the vulnerable and on gender equality, passed a legislation providing 33% reservation for women in parliament, to name a few.

While developing, India has always been conscious of our friends around the world and particularly in the Global South. We believe in shared growth and shared prosperity, which guides the development partnership initiatives that we have undertaken worldwide. Starting from 1964, we have been providing scholarship for a large number of short-term courses under the Indian Technical and Economic Partnership to people around the world. We have become a significant development partner through Lines of Credit and Grants-in-Aid to the global south, which today stands at USD 39 billion, which includes more than USD 12 billion to Africa. During Covid pandemic, we not only produced in large quantities international vaccines, but also invented our own, and distributed them under the scheme "Vaccine Friendship" to the Global South. India is one of the largest contributors to the Peacekeeping around the world. India has become a first responder at times of natural calamities and other disasters to the neighbourhood. We have shared our technical and technological expertise, and believe in growing together.

In the international arena, India has been playing a significant role and contributing positively for the global commons. The recently concluded Indian Presidency of G20 showcased this role effectively.

India and Nigeria enjoy strong and historical relations. With the ties dating back to before Nigeria's independence, our bilateral relations have been nurtured by the leadership of both the countries. Our economic and trade relations are strong and growing. Currently nearly 150 Indian companies with

an investment of USD 27 billion are in Nigeria, mainly in the manufacturing sector and employ the largest number of people after the Federal Government. Owing to the special relationship, India had invited Nigeria as a Guest Country during her presidency of G20. We had a memorable visit of H.E. Mr. Bola Ahmed Tinubu, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the G20 Summit last year in September, that consolidated the ties further. Out of the 14 billion promised during this visit as investment into Nigerian economy, 7 billion has already been signed immediately after the visit. Earlier this week, we had a successful visit of our External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar for the Joint Commission meeting. He had interactions with the leadership and business community in Nigeria and the Indian Diaspora.

We stand shoulder to shoulder with our Nigerian friends in our joint journey towards development and would like to convey the commitment of the Government of India in further strengthening our ties.

I would like to thank you all for joining us tonight in this celebration. I would also like to thank my colleagues who have worked hard in organising this event.

I wish you all a pleasant evening.
