

**SPEECH BY PRESIDENT OF INDIA AT STATE BANQUET IN
HONOUR OF H.E. U HTIN KYAW, PRESIDENT OF MYANMAR**

Rashtrapati Bhavan: August 29, 2016

Your Excellency U Htin Kyaw, President of the Republic of the Union of
Myanmar,
Daw Su Su Lwin,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me immense pleasure to welcome Your Excellency, Mr.
President, Daw Su Su Lwin and your distinguished delegation to India.

Excellency,

We appreciate your having chosen India for your first State Visit
abroad as President of Myanmar. Our two nations are old friends. We
have a long common history - our abiding cultural linkages, societal
bonds and our common experience of colonial rule unite us. Myanmar,
having been a province of British India till 1937, still hosts a significantly
large Indian community.

In the formative years of our two nations, our ties were cemented by our leaders and Founding Fathers - Mahatma Gandhi and General Aung San, U Ottama and Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Prime Minister U Nu. They not only shared a close personal rapport - but also led their people in struggle against colonial rulers. They all shared a deep commitment to Asian unity. In January 1947, en route to London for negotiations for Burmese independence, Aung San had stopped in New Delhi for consultations with the Indian leaders. U Nu and Pandit Nehru remained in close touch in the period before the independence of India on 15th August 1947 and the freedom of Burma on January 4, 1948. Dr Rajendra Prasad, as President of India's Constituent Assembly attended the first Anniversary of independent Burma. He carried a sapling of the sacred Bodhi tree which was planted at the Shwedegon Pagoda. These relationships created a great reservoir of goodwill that sustained our bilateral ties as Myanmar made the transition from military to civilian rule. Today they inspire us as we make the road map for our journey ahead.

Excellency,

The momentous elections of 2015 gave your Party, the National League for Democracy, a very clear mandate. Through their vote, the people of Myanmar demonstrated their love and trust in Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. India admired the mature, peaceful, and exemplary conduct of

the electorate in exercising their franchise - in multiparty elections held for the first time in decades. We laud the statesmanship of Myanmar's leaders, civilian and military, in respecting the will of the people and facilitating the smooth transfer of power.

Excellency,

As a friendly neighbour and development partner, India has always stood beside the people of Myanmar with support and assistance when it was required. '*Putting the people first*' is the guiding philosophy of our development cooperation partnership. We look forward to working with your Government in areas that you have prioritised – such as infrastructure development, connectivity, capacity building, education, healthcare and the setting up of small development projects.

We are confident that the Kaladan and Trilateral Highway projects will significantly enhance connectivity, trade and economic prosperity in the regions that they serve; the Myanmar Institute of Information Technology in Mandalay and the Advanced Centre of Agricultural Research and Education in Nay Pyi Taw have the potential to mature into centres of excellence and agricultural research serving the whole of South East Asia.

Excellency,

We see Myanmar as a key partner in our 'Neighbourhood First' and 'Act East' policy. As we look eastward to rejuvenate historical, cultural and commercial links between India and South East Asia, Myanmar is the first on our horizon.

As we work together towards our common developmental goals, India would be very happy to share with Myanmar our experience and expertise in power generation and exploiting natural resources in a sustainable manner.

We offer our tried and tested models for governance, federalism and the constitutional and administrative arrangements necessary to support them.

We attach high value to Myanmar's contribution and further role in achieving our shared vision of stability, peace and progress in our region. We welcome the bold step taken by State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in initiating an inclusive process for peace through the *21st Century Panglong Conference*. With regard to our common security concerns and our joint efforts in the area of border management, we have agreed to accord special attention to the economic progress of our border areas – that will transform them into zones of peace and prosperity.

We would like to see Myanmar as India's gateway to ASEAN and India as Myanmar's bridge to South Asia.

Excellency,

Your State Visit is opportune as it is taking place at the very beginning of your Government's term – as Myanmar embarks into a promising new chapter in its history. My Government stands ready to extend unstinting support whenever, wherever, and however you desire it for achieving the aspirations of your people and the policies of your Government.

Your visit has had an auspicious start in Bodh Gaya. We are happy that you could visit the famed Taj Mahal and hope that you will be able to see some interesting aspects of New Delhi.

Indeed your visit opens a new and vibrant chapter in our bilateral relations. We wish the people and government of Myanmar great success in their march towards democracy, progress and prosperity.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

May I request you to please join me in raising a toast to:

The health and happiness of His Excellency President, U Htin Kyaw and Daw Su Su Lwin;

The progress and prosperity of our peoples and countries; and

The enduring friendship and cooperation between India and Myanmar.