

75th Anniversary
Independence Day of India Celebrations
ILCC, Riga
18 August 2022

Remarks by Ambassador
Tanmaya Lal

Hon'ble Member of Parliament, Excellencies, Dear Friends,

Namaskar,

It is a privilege to join you today here in Riga on this landmark occasion as India celebrates 75 years of Independence.

May I thank the Indo Latvian Chamber of Commerce for organising this special event.

My special thanks to all our Latvian friends who have joined us this evening. Your presence here is deeply valued.

India and Latvia are good friends and our partnership is growing steadily.

Friends,

This Festival of IndiaAt75, or the Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav, is a proud occasion to look back at our remarkable journey.

In this short span of 75 years, we have come a long way despite all odds.

India is a young nation, which is rooted in one of the oldest civilizations of the world. India is defined by its democracy and also the immense diversity among its people who represent one sixth of the entire humanity.

There is a bewildering variety of languages, faiths, ethnicities, culture, art, cuisines, music and dance traditions. Yet there has always been a fundamental unity in this diversity.

India won its independence after a long hard non-violent peoples' struggle. Freedom came at a huge cost. A traumatic partition and massive forced migration. We started from a very difficult situation.

However, a complete transformation is underway in India.

Despite the exploitation and the huge challenges of our colonial past, tremendous progress has been achieved.

Today, according to IMF, India is the fastest growing large economy – the world's fifth largest economy with a GDP of nearly 3 trillion dollars. Our exports and FDI levels are now at record levels.

Last year, despite Covid, 44 Unicorns – Startups with more than 1 billion dollar valuation - came from India. The highest in the world.

Digital transformation is rapidly scaling up development.

Today India is the global leader in real time digital payments. Mobile data usage in India is the largest in the world.

According to World Bank, even during Covid19 pandemic, extreme poverty has declined in India.

India produced indigenous Covid vaccine within 11 months. The world's first ever DNA based vaccine also came from India.

India has already administered more than 2 billion doses of Covid vaccines in 18 months' time!

I may recall that India is the first nation whose spacecraft reached Mars orbit in its first attempt! A manned space mission is now being prepared. Space technologies are deployed for extensive development solutions.

Indian scientists today work at their research stations in Arctic, Antarctic and Himalaya, contributing to the global research.

A Deep Ocean Mission is underway.

From supercomputers to fighter aircraft to aircraft carriers are now being manufactured in India.

Airports to Metros are now being run on solar power. India is among the leaders on climate action.

India today is also a big international development partner – building roads, dams, irrigation, metros, power transmission lines, schools, hospitals in a number of our partner countries.

India is among the first responders in humanitarian emergencies in the Indian Ocean region.

Affordable vaccines and generic drugs made in India are lifeline in many developing countries.

At a time of disruption of food supply chains, India is providing food grains to people of a number of countries.

The largest contributor to UN Peacekeeping is India. The first ever All Women UN Police Peacekeeping team came from India.

All this transformation is being achieved within an inclusive and open democratic framework.

Whether it is climate change or global health or international peace & security, India is working closely with partner countries.

Friends,

We greatly value our friendship with Latvia, as we mark 30 years of our diplomatic relations.

India's ties with Latvia and the Baltic region continue to grow.

High level engagements at Head of State or Head of Government level have become more frequent in recent years. There have been four interactions between our Foreign Ministers in the last three years. We also interacted during the first India Nordic Baltic Conclave in 2020.

The pandemic had affected the interaction but we now expect a resumption of high-level exchange.

Friends,

Last year I had the privilege of presenting my credentials to Hon'ble President Egils Levits, although in a hybrid format. I also had some very useful interaction with other senior officials from Latvia on a range of issues.

Earlier this year, I had the opportunity to visit Riga and to meet some of you.

We are working with the National Museum on a project of archiving their collection of Indian art work.

The Ayush Chair at University of Latvia is functioning again.

We have worked with our Latvian friends and members of Indian community to organise International Day of Yoga sessions despite the Covid constraints.

It was encouraging to know about some of the work that Indians are undertaking in Latvia in various fields. It was also good to interact with some Indian students studying at various Latvian universities, as also their faculty.

It was good to see some high-profile sporting encounters despite Covid19, especially the Billie Jean King Tennis, Shooting and Chess.

Friends,

I look forward to working closely with our Latvian colleagues to build upon the excellent groundwork that has already been laid. To explore opportunities on engagement in specialised sectors such IT, healthcare, pharmaceuticals, biotechnology, space, logistics and others.

To the members of Indian Diaspora, I would like to say that you are also Ambassadors for India, and help build bridges between our countries.

You represent not only the hard work and professionalism, but also India's diverse cultural heritage and the spirit to live together in harmony.

My best wishes to all of you and our Latvian friends.

Jai Hind.

Long live India Latvia Friendship.