

# Press Statement

## **PRIME MINISTER:**

Thank you, Prime Minister for your welcome. Your hospitality is as warm as it is magnificent. We are very honoured to be here at your invitation.

As you said, our two nations have so much in common. Cricket, of course, but we have a commitment to democracy and the rule of law, and you lead, sir, the largest democracy in the world. Indian historians have often described that India was an improbable democracy but it is the world's largest. The success you have achieved is the wonder of the world. The largest democracy in the world, shortly to be the largest nation in the world, built out of so much diversity and you've achieved this remarkable unity of purpose and defying again skeptics, you've delivered a growth rate that is equally the wonder of the world, recognising that opening markets, deregulation, enabling businesses and individuals to pursue their own dreams, their own freedom, is the way to deliver the prosperity upon which all depends.

Now, Australia has, Prime Minister, the resources and the expertise as we've just seen to make a very substantial contribution to India's growth and development. Spanning education, training, science and innovation, our dynamic and growing knowledge partnership can be truly transformative.

We are already working together to harness the creativity and the drive of our best and brightest minds. Our flagship joint research fund, the Australia India Strategic Research Fund is Australia's largest with any country.

It has helped our universities, research institutions and companies to solve the practical challenges in critical areas to both countries, including health, food security, and energy, as you've noted.

The Deakin-TERI Nanobiotechnology Research Centre, which we just inaugurated, and I might say Prime Minister, having been involved in the technology business in the past, I always approach any live demonstration with great anxiety. In the technology business they talk about the demo-God, which is a malevolent deity which generally makes sure that live online demonstrations don't quite work, but that was brilliant and I want to say thank you to the Chancellor and Vice-Chancellor of Deakin University for allaying my concerns. So well done.

But this research centre will bring up to 100 researchers together to solve some of the world's biggest problems in developing biofuels to early detection of crop diseases to improve productivity. And these are practical solutions with commercial prospects for both of our countries.

Likewise there is the potential to work with your government, Prime Minister, as you pursue your ambition to train 400 million Indians over the next few years.

Our world-class skills training system including train-the-trainer courses

which are already piloted in five Indian cities can help India build scale quickly and open up opportunities for Australian training providers.

As you noted, more than 60,000 Indian students studied in our institutions in 2016, and I am committed, and we had a very fruitful discussion about this and Prime Minister you gave me a lot of great advice, you have made education and higher education such a passion from your time in Gujarat to now as Prime Minister of India, it was very, very helpful. We will continue to ensure that we provide outstanding opportunities for Indian students and also that Australian students learn more about India by visiting and studying here including through the scholarships and grants supported by my Government's New Colombo Plan.

Our deepening collaboration on water management is supporting your National Water Policy by improving river basin planning and management, hydrological modelling and sustainable water use.

And I might say the management of water resources in India has been a passion of several prime ministers of Australia including one of our earliest, Alfred Deakin who made a study of the irrigation system in India a particular focus of his as he took learnings from that and set up the irrigation models for Australia.

Our know-how and resources are already partnering with India's 24x7 Power For All, Smart Cities and Make in India programs, but there is room for further growth.

We've worked closely with India to meet our respective requirements for the provision of fuel for India's civil nuclear program, and we look forward to the first export of Australian uranium to India as soon as possible.

Now, Prime Minister, you recognise that all Indians need access to reliable and affordable energy, and like us, you share a technology agnostic all of the above approach. Pragmatic. That's exactly how we focus on the issue. So we are pleased to be providing increasing quantities of high quality coal for steel making and increasingly for power generation with advanced super critical technology. Like Australia, India is planning to increase its pumped hydro storage capacity and we look forward to sharing expertise in that vitally important part of the 21st century energy system.

And India, like Australia and many other countries is also advancing solar energy. Indeed, we believe that by next year, about 60 per cent of the world's solar cells will use technology developed by Australian researchers. Solar energy offers lower cost distributed energy which is of particular importance in the developing world.

So I want to congratulate you, Prime Minister, for your global leadership in establishing the International Solar Alliance and I am very happy to announce that we will join that alliance.

Now, our trading relationship is delivering significant benefits to our respective nations. Last year two-way trade in goods and services was nearly

\$20 billion, more than double what it was a decade ago. But given the complementarities of our two economies, this is a fraction of the level it could and should be.

Now we are working with India to secure timely conclusion of a quality Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the RCEP, which would provide a significant boost to regional confidence.

We had a very good discussion about the CECA, the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement between India and Australia and I think it is fair to say that we feel that progress has not been as fast as either of us would like it to be.

And so, as you said, we have asked our, we will ask our chief negotiators to schedule an early meeting to get the process moving. We will ask them to tabulate the areas of ambition where each side is seeking access so that we can see where and to what extent the parties, the negotiators are apart and they will report back to us as soon as possible so that we can keep the focus on delivering the CECA and identifying the areas where more work needs to be done.

But in the meantime, the wheels of industry go on and we are working to identify tangible, commercial opportunities to strengthen two-way trade and investment and this will be a particular focus of my visit to Mumbai later this week.

Finally, as you noted sir, our work together in the strategic and security spheres continues to gain momentum, through regular engagement across all three armed services and high-level talks with our defence ministers and officials.

As Indo-Pacific democracies committed to the rules based international order, we share interests on a broad range of regional and global security issues.

Building on the 2014 Framework for Security Cooperation, I hope that our new MoU on Combatting Transnational Organised Crime including International Terrorism will continue to strengthen this strategic partnership.

It will facilitate closer collaboration on counter-terrorism, cyber-security, people smuggling and human trafficking, money laundering and a tax on critical infrastructure.

And in addition, as you noted, we are working more closely together with our friends and partners in the region, including through the East Asia Summit and the Indian Ocean Rim Association.

In conclusion, thank you Prime Minister Modi for your personal commitment to helping us realise the full potential of the Australia India partnership. With our shared commitment and the passion, the ingenuity, the determination of our two nations, I have no doubt that our partnership will go from strength to strength.

**[ends]**