

Embassy of India
Yerevan

Speech for Republic Day Reception hosted by Ambassador

(Armenia Marriott Hotel, 26 January 2025)

- H. E. Mr. Mher Grigoryan, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Armenia,
- Ministers and Deputy Ministers,
- Members of Parliament and Officials,
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps, Armenian Friends of India,
- Members of the Indian community, Tiknaik yev Paronaik!

Bari yereko! Namaskar! Good evening! Hargeli hurer! A very warm welcome to you all to our 76th Republic Day celebrations! On this day in 1950, India became a Republic with the adoption of our Constitution drafted by our Constituent Assembly made up of our Founding Fathers.

2. 2024, the year gone by, was a milestone year in India's democratic journey, with the successful holding of the mammoth free and fair general elections in seven phases, conducted with unprecedented efficiency by our Election Commission. It was the biggest democratic exercise in the world with 968 million eligible voters out of which 642 million people actually exercised their franchise, an impressive voter turn-out of over 66%. The National Democratic Alliance led by our Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, was re-elected for a third consecutive term.

3. Before moving on to the forward strides made in Indo-Armenian relations, let me quickly tell you about the Maha Kumbh Mela 2025 in Prayagraj, the biggest congregation of humanity – a divine confluence of faith and modernity currently going on in India from 13 January to 26

February. A Maha Kumbh takes place once in 12 years held in rotation at Prayagraj (the holiest), Haridwar, Ujjain, and Nashik – the four places where a few drops of nectar or Amrit fell during the cosmic battle between the Gods and demons churning the oceans to extract the pot (Kumbh) of immortal nectar. This year's Maha Kumbh is being held coinciding with a unique celestial alignment which occurs once in 144 years! An estimated 450 to 600 million people are expected to attend the Maha Kumbh and take holy dips at the confluence – the Triveni Sangam - of the holy River Ganga, Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati. What is also unique about this year's Maha Kumbh is the extensive use of AI from underwater drones to AI powered cameras, AI-driven parking systems etc. to ensure the smooth and seamless conduct of such a humongous gathering of people. The Maha Kumbh 2025 presents to the world an extraordinary blend of spirituality and innovation and is expected to generate revenues of around USD 23 billion!

4. From spirituality to space, India recently became the 4th country in the world to successfully achieve an unmanned docking in space. Along with the approval for a third Launch Pad, this is an important moment enabling higher launch frequencies, Indian human spaceflight and many more space exploration missions.

Excellencies, Friends,

5. Bilateral relations between India and Armenia marched ahead and was marked by further consolidation in 2024. This ranged from our regular political exchanges to parliamentary contacts, to institutionalization of defence cooperation, to enhanced commercial, cultural and educational ties. The first-ever “Yerevan Dialogue”, modelled on India's “Raisina Dialogue”, was jointly organized by the Armenian MFA and the Indian think-tank, Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in September 2024. It brought together Ministers, diplomats, think-tanks

and academicians from across the world. The resounding success of the first edition has ensured that it will be an annual feature, and the second one will take place later this year. The year culminated with the high-profile visit of the President of the National Assembly, H.E. Mr. Alen Simonyan, to India in December 2024.

6. Armenia officially became the 104th full member and first country in the region to join the International Solar Alliance after the two sides exchanged the Instrument of Ratification. India and Armenia remained steadfast in giving support to each other at all international fora.

7. Development cooperation, especially capacity building needs a special mention. The number of Armenian officials and others from the civil society who have undergone training programmes in diverse fields in India, witnessed a significant boost this year. For instance, a group of 18 officials from the State Revenue Committee have just returned after their training stint at the National Forensic Sciences University in India. We are committed to further boosting our development partnership.

8. Indian films have always been popular in Armenia. Responding to this demand, our Embassy organized a Festival of Films from the popular Yash-Raj group in November 2024. We have planned film festivals dedicated to the centenary of the iconic showman of Bollywood, Raj Kapoor in early February and one for Mithun Chakraborty alias Jimmy, in March 2025. We hope you will turn up in large numbers to watch these classics.

Excellencies, Friends,

9. Armenia is an important partner for us in the South Caucasus. We are happy to see that Armenia is working consistently for bringing peace in the region. India, the land of the Apostle of Peace, Mahatma Gandhi, has always stood for peaceful dialogue to resolve conflicts.

10. With these words, I once again welcome you all and thank you for taking time out on this Sunday evening to attend our 76th Republic Day celebrations. I now invite our Chief Guest, H.E. Mr. Mher Grigoryan, to deliver his remarks

Shat shnorakalem!
