



Message from  
HE Pratibha Patil  
President of the  
Republic of India

**M**y forthcoming State Visit to the United Kingdom is the third such visit by a President of India since we became a Republic in 1950. I am looking forward to the visit as an opportunity to convey to the leadership and the people of the United Kingdom a message of friendship and our commitment to enhance bilateral ties.

India is today among the most dynamic economies of the world. As a responsible member of the international community, India has consistently strived for peace and development in the world. We acknowledge the consistent and public support extended by the UK for India to assume its rightful place as a permanent member in an expanded UN Security Council. International bodies would be more effective when they reflect contemporary realities.

India has and will continue to play a constructive role in addressing the challenges and opportunities of an interdependent world. India and the United Kingdom are working together closely, including in multilateral organisations, to deal with global issues that are impacting people in countries across the world. More recently, this cooperation was evident in the G20 Summit meetings where efforts to deal with the global economic and financial crises were coordinated. Our two countries are collaborating in many sectors – rural development, health and education – to meet the common objectives of the Millennium Development Goals.

Based on the many commonalities of views and shared values, our bilateral relationship has been growing. In September 2004, our two Governments entered into a Strategic Partnership. This was a watershed decision, which has had a significant impact on the entire canvas of our bilateral ties, which are wide-ranging and multifaceted. We have close

cooperation on fundamental security issues like counter-terrorism and extensive interaction in many sectors.

Our bilateral cooperation has a substantial and strong economic base but there are innumerable opportunities for their further rapid growth and diversification. Bilateral trade is over £12 billion annually. More than 500 companies from India are working in the UK, and a similar number of UK companies have their operations in India. We are the third largest investor in the UK. Substantial Indian investments in the UK in the past three years have secured more than 20,000 jobs last year alone. On its part, the UK has invested significantly in the power, oil and gas, telecom and services sectors in India. The movement of capital between our two markets has been a remarkable success story. We look forward to significant UK investments in our ambitious plans for infrastructure development in India over the next few years.

India and the UK have made significant progress in cooperating in the area of education, as well as in Science and Technology. This cooperation includes governmental and private sector institutions. The establishment of the UK-Indian Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) has been a milestone in this regard. Together with the UK's Universities and its Department of Innovation, India's Department of Science and Technology has been jointly funding numerous research awards since 2007 under the UKIERI. The successful establishment of an India-UK Education Forum in 2008, following the Summit meeting between our Prime Ministers in New Delhi, has brought together leading UK academic institutions and education bodies in India like the Universities Grants Commission, Planning Commission, Knowledge Commission and the All India Council for Technical Education.

Such examples of cooperation can be

sustained through greater people-to-people contacts between our two countries. Tourists and students, business-persons and policy-makers form the bulk of the more than million people travelling between our two countries every year. This movement of people has been greatly facilitated by the increase in the number of air connections between our two countries, which have risen from about two dozen a week a few years ago to more than a hundred a

week today. Air connectivity has enabled people residing in different parts of India and the UK to travel, opening up newer possibilities for bilateral cooperation. We must, however, further enhance mobility between our two countries.

I am confident that my State Visit to the UK will highlight the special nature of the India-UK relationship. I welcome the initiative taken by FIRST to bring out a special issue to mark my visit. **15**

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Windsor Castle is decked out in preparation for the first State Visit by an Indian President in almost 20 years