

Statement by the Prime Minister to the media

25/11/2009

Before I begin my remarks I wish to say a few words on the eve of the first anniversary of the terrorist attack in Mumbai last year on November 26th.

This is a day of remembrance and of paying homage to all the innocent civilians and our brave men in uniform who lost their lives in one of the worst terrorist attacks our country has ever seen. On behalf the nation, I would like to send a message to each and every one of their families that we share their grief with a very heavy heart. We will never forget the suffering they have gone through. Our thoughts are with them as they pray for the souls of their loved ones.

The attack in Mumbai was a calculated attempt by forces outside the country to destabilize our secular polity, create communal discord and undermine the country's economic and social progress. Such forces should have no doubt that they will fail in their attempts. The supreme sacrifice that so many of our countrymen and women and those from foreign lands made last November will not go in vain.

India's commitment to an open, democratic and secular society will not be shaken by such assaults on our way of life.

The Government will not rest till we have brought the perpetrators of this crime to justice. This is our solemn duty. We have taken up the matter with all the force at our command with the Government of Pakistan. We expect the masterminds of the attack and their supporters to be tried and punished. The infrastructure of terrorism and all safe havens have to be dismantled.

Within the country we have taken several measures to strengthen our security and intelligence system. An effective response mechanism to deter such threats in future has been put in place. We will take more such steps till we are satisfied that we have foolproof arrangements in place. I wish to reassure the nation that strengthening internal security is the top priority of the government, and we will leave no stone unturned to safeguard and protect the lives of our citizens.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I have completed a very productive visit to the United States. Based on my discussions with President Obama and other American leaders, I am confident that we can not only continue but also strengthen the momentum of our relations built up in the last few years.

President Obama recognized the important role India-US relations can play in meeting the global challenges of the 21st century. We agreed that there is a historic opportunity for India and the United States to work together for world peace and stability on the basis of our shared values, consensus and cooperation.

We discussed several ideas on how we can work together to accelerate global economic recovery and put it on a more sustainable and balanced path in the future.

We welcome President Obama's strong commitment to ensuring a comprehensive and balanced outcome at the climate change meeting in Copenhagen. We have agreed to work together bilaterally and with all other countries to ensure this outcome.

We have established a framework for taking our relations forward. The Joint Statement that has been issued reflects our priorities for future collaboration in agriculture, education, health, clean energy and energy security, defence, science and technology.

We agreed on the early and full implementation of our civil nuclear cooperation agreement. This paves the way for transfers of high technology items to India.

I had a very good interaction with American business leaders. They showed keenness to expand business with India. I reaffirmed to them the commitment of the government to facilitate foreign investment in India and to pursue key reform measures. President Obama and I met the members of the India-US CEOs Forum and urged them to assist the governments in building a vibrant trade and economic partnership.

President Obama was very conscious and aware of the threats both our countries face from terrorism, and the need for us to work together to combat it. We have agreed to strengthen cooperation in the area of counter-terrorism. He told me that the United States highly values India's role in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan. We had similar views on establishing peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific.

I also met the Speaker of the US House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi, who is a good friend of India, and a number of leading members of the House and the Senate. In all these meetings, as well as those with the business community and strategic experts, I found a fund of goodwill for India. There is great warmth, respect and admiration for India, matched by a genuine desire to work with India to strengthen our strategic partnership.

Later today I will be meeting members of the Indian community in America. They have played a magnificent role in bringing our two countries together. We are proud of their achievements and would like to see them prosper and excel further. Their contribution to American society and economy was something which all leaders referred to in my meetings with them.

I am most grateful to President Obama and First Lady Mrs. Michelle Obama for the warmth of their hospitality and for honouring me and my wife as their first State visitors. President Obama has accepted my invitation to visit India, and we look forward to receiving him and his family in India in 2010.

I would also like to make a special mention of the friendship which both Vice-President Dr. Biden and Secretary Mrs. Clinton have shown to India. We deeply value their personal commitment to our relations.

I leave with a sense of confidence that my visit has deepened mutual understanding between India and the United States, and set new directions for our strategic partnership in a way that will advance our national interests.

Thank you.

Washington DC
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