



*JPNN/Astana / Jul 07, 2015/Prime Minister Narendra Modi today underlined the common Islamic heritage of both India and Central Asia which has always rejected the forces of extremism and strongly pitched for enhanced defence and security cooperation between the two to combat terrorism. On his first visit to Central Asian countries, Modi, who flew to Kazakhstan's capital from Uzbekistan earlier in the day, asserted that both India and Central Asia cannot achieve their full potential without each other and nor will the region be more stable without the cooperation between the two. Addressing*

*a gathering at the Nazerbayev University, the Prime Minister said, "We live at the frontier of instability. We live close to the crucible of extremism and terrorism. We see terrorism spawned by nations and groups. Today, we also see cyber space become a platform without borders for terror to draw recruits to its cause." So, during this visit, we will strengthen our defence and security cooperation in the region. But, we will also combat terrorism by the strength of our values and our commitment to humanism." Asserting that he has come to write a "new chapter in an ancient relationship", Modi said, "the Islamic heritage of both India and Central Asia is defined by the highest ideals of Islam — knowledge, piety, compassion and welfare. This is a heritage founded on the principle of love and devotion." And, it has always rejected the forces of extremism. Today, this is an important source of strength that brings India and Central Asia together." He also noted that the confluence of Indian and Islamic civilisations took place in Central Asia and enriched each other not only in spiritual thought but also in medicine, science, mathematics and astronomy. Immediately after his arrival, Modi held talks with his Kazakh counterpart Karim Massimov on various key bilateral and regional issues. The Prime Minister will be holding extensive talks with the Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev tomorrow after which the two countries are likely to ink a number of pacts including in the field of energy.*

*During his nearly half-an-hour speech, Modi touched upon other important issues including regional connectivity, establishment of a 21st century silk route and economic integration between India and Central Asian countries. Noting that the richness of ties between India and Central Asia was written into the contours of Indian cities and daily lives there, Modi said one could see this in architecture, art, handicraft and textile and in most popular foods. "The dargahs of Delhi resonate with Sufi music that draws people from all faiths. The cities of Central Asia have become centres of yoga and Hindi, long before the world came together to celebrate the International Day of Yoga on 21st June," the Prime Minister said. However, he also rued that the engagement between India and Central Asia falls short of its promise and potential and said, "We have a special place in our hearts for each other. But, we have not paid as much attention to each other as we should. This will change. That is why I am travelling to all five countries in the region in the early stages of my Government."*

*"Both India and Central Asia cannot achieve their full potential without each other. Nor will our people be safer and our region more stable without our cooperation," Modi said while noting that they have built modern, inclusive and pluralist nations at a time when many in the region are caught in conflict and instability. Stressing that from theatres of conflicts to the calm neighbourhoods of distant cities, terrorism has become a global challenge as never before, Modi said it was a force that is larger and more enduring than its changing names, locations and targets. "So, we must ask ourselves: Will we let a generation of youth be lost to guns and hate, because they will hold us accountable for their lost future?," he said. Describing Kazakhstan as "a nation of global stature and respect", he said this was not just because mother nature has been generous to it with resources of every kind. "Kazakhstan is a voice of responsibility and maturity in international forums, including the United Nations." He also recalled Kazakhstan's generosity in making way for India's bid for the membership of the UN Security Council in 2011-12 and assured India's support for the Central Asian country's bid in 2017-18. On trade ties, Modi said trade was expanding, but it was still modest. The cooperation in energy sector has begun, he said while highlighting today's launch of the drilling of the first oil well with Indian investments in Kazakhstan. He also said Indian investments in Central Asia have started flowing in and asserted that India was prepared to invest more in a new partnership of prosperity. The Prime Minister also offered expertise in information and communication technology to create wealth and opportunities for the youth as well as in the field of space technology for closer partnership in development and resource management. Agency*