

The Prime Minister:

Mr Speaker, Sir, the Mauritian nation is indeed honoured to receive the Honourable Shri Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister of the Republic of India, a country acknowledged universally as the largest democracy in the world. Like India, Mr Prime Minister, Sir, Mauritius has been moulded in the cradle of democracy. This is the path we have committed ourselves to take for the development of our country and the fulfillment of the aspirations of our people.

That you have chosen, Mr Prime Minister, our temple of democracy to deliver the major speech of your visit to our island nation is a matter of pride for us. This Assembly is greatly honoured by your distinguished presence, a presence that reflects the intimacy of the relationship that binds our two peoples and countries. In fact, you have indeed privileged us by making to Mauritius your first bilateral visit abroad since your assumption of office as Prime Minister. And allow me to recall that soon after my own assumption of office as Prime Minister, it was to India that I made my first official visit abroad. Mr Prime Minister, it has been indeed a privilege to listen to you and savour those words of wisdom that you have pronounced on a variety of issues that are of common interest to us. Indeed, your words incarnate the wisdom of India – wisdom that has traversed the meanders of history and withstood the test of time; wisdom that has sprouted from the cradle of civilisation that your great country is recognised as; wisdom that is a source of great inspiration to our modern world.

And yes, Mr Prime Minister, pluralism does work, and yes, pluralism is the order of the day. Thank you for reminding us of that.

Mr Prime Minister, Sir, you have travelled from the bank of the Ganges to be with us and to see for yourself the rich tapestry of our bilateral relations. Besides sharing the waters of the Indian Ocean, this small island country of ours, described by one of your illustrious predecessors, Shrimati Indira Gandhi, as a “great little country”, shares many a common ideal with India, one of the lands of our ancestry. We in Mauritius hold that our ties with your great country are sacred. Indeed, the relations that bind India and Mauritius are born of history and go beyond the official, State or Government to Government relations. Ours is the relationship that is deeply

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embedded in the hearts of our people and no one and nothing can restrain the natural and affectionate bonds that make our relationship unique.

Mr Prime Minister, it is my privilege, on behalf of Mr Speaker, of all Members of the National Assembly on both sides of the House and the Clerk of the Assembly, to thank you for the distinct honour that you have bestowed on our Parliament by your presence and your address. A day we shall remember for long, Mr Prime Minister, Sir.

Thank you, Mr Speaker.