

Speech at the Inaugural Ceremony of India Week (September 9, 2013)

Your Excellency Mr. Olaf Scholz, Hon'ble First Mayor of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Mr. Gunit Chadha, Co-Chief Executive Officer of the Deutsche Bank-Asia Pacific, other high officials of the Senate, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

I feel greatly honoured and privileged to be present at this function that marks the official inauguration of the India Week 2013. First of all, I would like to convey my gratitude to the Senate Chancellery of the city of Hamburg for having invited me to this programme. I take this opportunity to congratulate the main organizers of the India Week 2013, namely the Hamburg Senate Chancellery, Ministry of Culture, Hamburg Chamber of Commerce, German-India Round Table as well as Hamburg Business Development Corporation for their sincere efforts and dedicated approach which made this event a reality. I would also like to convey my best wishes to all the exhibitors and organizers for the successful holding of their programmes during the India Week.

2. This is the 5th time an India Week is being organized in the Free and Hanseatic city of Hamburg. Ever since its beginning in the year 2007, India Week has attracted scores of people from both Germany and outside. Each time the event has witnessed increasing participation from exhibitors as well as visitors. I do not think there are many other cities or places in the world that celebrate India-specific week the way Hamburg does – be it in terms of the enthusiasm or regularity or frequency. This bears ample testimony to the longstanding and close relations the city has with India. Besides being an important trade partner of India, Hamburg is also historically linked to India in more ways than one. It was in this city that India's National Anthem Jana Gana Mana was first played in 1942 by the Radio Symphony Orchestra of Hamburg. The occasion was founding of the Indo-German Association which was graced by the presence of our great freedom fighter Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. This historic event was later broadcast by the All India Radio in 1980 under the

title 'A National Anthem Born in Exile'. Thus this city is intricately linked with the freedom movement of India. The author of the National Anthem and great poet Mr. Rabindra Nath Tagore visited Hamburg on his way to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. Our first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru came to Hamburg during his first visit to Germany in 1956. In subsequent years, Hamburg has welcomed a lot of Indians who have made it their home and have contributed immensely to the development of this country. The educational institutes in Hamburg especially the Technical University has attracted a lot of Indian students while the University of Hamburg has been running an Indology department offering Indian language courses successfully over the last few years.

3. The city of Hamburg has played a pivotal role in strengthening the economic and commercial relations between India and Germany. With over 1.3 billion Euro worth of total trade, it is the fourth largest trading partner of India among the German Bundeslaender. In fact, the trade volume between India and Hamburg has more than tripled between 2000 and 2012 with India featuring in the first 15 of Hamburg's foreign trade destinations. Besides, Hamburg is home to a number of industries that have strong business partnership with India, especially in areas like civil aviation, shipping, machinery, engineering, logistics, renewable energy etc. Cooperation in other areas like education, research and development as well as media where Hamburg has core competence is also witnessing an upward trend. It is estimated that more than 400 Hamburg based companies maintain economic relations with India, with many of them having a branch or an office or a production plant in India. Likewise, the presence of Indian companies in Hamburg is also on the rise and at present around 40 such companies including some globally reputed firms are active here. Recognizing the growing importance of India, the city of Hamburg established a representative office in Mumbai in January 2011 to foster economic relations as well as cultural and educational exchanges. Hamburg has also initiated a unique tradition of 'Honorary Ambassadors' of which India has two (one each in Mumbai and

Hyderabad) to further promote the close relations between the city and India. In November 2011, a unique collaborative project titled Project Y ie, Yamuna – Elbe project was launched by the Hamburg Ministry of Culture with the objective of increasing awareness about ecologically sustainable river systems. In nutshell, Hamburg's link with India encompasses a wide spectrum of activities covering a whole host of areas.

4. This year's India Week has generated renewed interest about India in Germany. More than 50 programmes – an increase of around 25% from last time - including exhibitions, seminars, workshops, podium discussions, dance and music shows, film festival as well as food festival have been organized as part of India Week 2013. The programmes are focused on 4 important subjects viz Politics & Society, Economy, Culture as well as Education & Science, with the theme '*Indien Entdecken*', otherwise 'Discover India'. Like in previous years, the response to this year's India Week has been phenomenal. The City of Hamburg has ensured that all participants in the India Week are guaranteed of a successful and fruitful event that would further promote the existing close association between Hamburg and India.

5. In conclusion, I must emphasise that I am really impressed by the tireless and meticulous efforts by the Senate Chancellery of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg in planning each and every event of India Week 2013. While congratulating once again all those who have worked hard for the success of this event, I sincerely hope that this would be a harbinger of more such events to come in future.

Herzlichen Dank!!