

RECEPTION SPEECH  
GIVEN TO WELCOME  
MINISTER SRIKANT  
KUMAR JENE, MP

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By John Kearns of Ireland India Council

8/20/2011

## **Minister, distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen!**

I would like to extend a warm welcome to the Honourable Minister Mr Srikant Kumar Jena M.P., Minister of State with Independent Charge in the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Government of India and his delegation visiting Ireland and to all of our distinguished guests attending this reception.

Minister, we are lucky to be very close to the house of George Bernard Shaw, where he got many of his thoughts and ideas helping him in his great writings. His literary work has huge interest and popularity not only in Ireland but among the Indians and India. He had also an interest in statistics himself, noting that statistics showed that of those who contract the habit of eating, very few survive.

Mr Jena your visit represents the culmination of months of hard work by your officials to coordinate with the Irish authorities. I hope it is an occasion for all of us to remember. As a council it is our responsibility to help and support friendship and cultural and commercial exchanges between our two countries and create the right conditions for business.

The foundation of Irish-Indian relations is centuries old and greatly strengthened by luminaries such as Éamon de Valera, Jawahar Lal Nehru, Rabindra Nath Tagore, W.B. Yeats and above all, Annie Besant and Mother Teresa. Alfred Web an Irish parliamentarian was invited to chair the Indian National

Congress session in 1894 - a unique example of the friendship between the people of our two countries.

During the dusk of the last century the founders of the Ireland India Council felt a strong need for an organisation which would provide a platform for interaction between Irish and Indians and facilitate contacts in the cultural, economic and education sector. As the Indian community in Ireland grew significantly over the last 10-15 years, so too did business opportunities between the two emerging knowledge-based economies, presenting immense scope for trade, commerce and collaborations in the research and development field.

The Ireland-India Council (IIC) was formally established in 2002 under the leadership of Professor Louis Smith, a well-known economist, who was engaged in developing Irish-Asian economic relations since the 1960's. IIC is an independent institution, created to encourage and facilitate cultural and economic exchanges between the people and institutions of Ireland and India. Over 9 years the Council has evolved into a leading organisation bringing together present and future leaders, professionals, intellectuals and diplomats from Ireland and India. The Council aims to broaden Ireland-India relations and lay the groundwork for future cooperation.

Minister, the Ireland-India Council organise a variety of programs, activities and initiatives each year. We celebrated last Diwali in this room, which was attended by two of our Government Ministers, the Lord Mayor of Dublin and Mayors of the greater Dublin region. In June this year we had organised the 2<sup>nd</sup> Ireland-India Science and Technology

Forum in Dublin which was a great success attended as it was by a Vice-chancellor and other distinguished Professors from India. We have round-the-year activities ranging from cultural events to other major events and day-to-day business services for our corporate and individual members. We are also concerned with issues of Immigration and Integration of Indian people into Irish life and culture.

Despite India being a huge country, a powerhouse of global economic growth and the biggest consumer market on the planet, we hope you will have a deep appreciation for our small island and the great opportunities it offers. Ireland is strategically located at the edge of the Atlantic Ocean. It is the European hub for many of the world's most successful multinational companies. We are equipped with a modern and a well-educated workforce. Our laws are exceptionally favourable for business and we have the lowest corporation tax in the whole of Europe. Both Ireland and India share a common history and a firm belief in democratic values.

We hope that your visit will launch a conversation between the leaders of our two countries and a new era of Ireland-India friendship and co-operation into the future and the opportunities it holds for us all. With that, please allow me to say a few words of thanks to you and those who have made today's event a reality.

I would particularly like to thank you Minister Jena for taking time out from your busy schedule to be with us. You are visiting Ireland whilst the Indian Parliament is in session and ministers rarely travel during such a period, which signifies your commitment. We sincerely appreciate this special consideration you have shown us.

Our thanks go to Mr Pankaj Jain, Additional Secretary of Statistics and programme Implementation, Government of India. We also thank former Indian Ambassador, P. S. Raghavan, who could not be with us today, as he has been transferred back to India.

I would like also to pay tribute to the work of the authorities of Dublin City Council, Kilkenny County Council, the Michael Smurfit Graduate Business School and Dublin City University and my own team and friends for their dedication, perseverance and positive spirit. In particular I must mention the incalculable but self-effacing input of Mr. Prashant Shukla without whom the IIC could not continue to operate as it has. Our thanks go to all who have stood beside IIC lending their support and volunteering encouragement to ensure Minister, that your visit would be a success.

Minister and friends let us now celebrate this evening, and share in our century's old Irish-Indian friendship. As friends, we have come to share a vision. Through friendship we can now turn that vision into reality.

Thank you.