



## **PRESS RELEASE**

*“A strategic partnership takes care of core economic, security and diplomatic needs.”*

There exists a widespread narrative in India that the India-Russia strategic partnership is fraying at the edges today. Trade and investment are shackled by objective geographical realities and subjective misperceptions. In culture, science & technology, education and tourism, the vibrancy of exchanges also appears to be flagging.

**New Delhi, July 4, 2017:** Ananta Aspen Centre organized a special interactive session with **Ambassador P S Raghavan**, *Convenor, National Security Advisory Board and Former Indian Ambassador to Russia* on **“India’s multi-alignment and Russia’s geopolitics: Recipe for discord?”** The session addressed some relevant questions of the Indian and Russian expectations of political relations and reflected upon the divergent strategic interests of India’s multi-alignment and Russia’s actions in our neighbourhood. **Ambassador S K Lambah**, *Chairman, Ananta Aspen Centre, Former Special Envoy of the Prime Minister of India & former Ambassador to Russia* chaired the session. The session provided a platform for a frank and open discussion to sift fact from fiction in the India-Russia relationship.

**Ambassador Lambah** in his opening remarks, elaborated on the good bilateral relations marked by decades of trust and confidence. Both the nations have worked closely in the fields of space and nuclear capabilities along with Defense, Science & Technology. There is also a joint recognition and belief in the concepts of Eurasian unity and multi-polarity in the world order. He added that “We must keep in mind that 20th century relations differ from those in the 21st century. Today, there is no need to look for exclusivity,” highlighting the growing concerns in the bilateral relationship such as the increasing cooperation between Russia and Pakistan and differing opinions of India and Russia on dealing with the Taliban in Afghanistan.

**Ambassador Raghavan**, enunciated on the widespread narratives prevalent in the media today which indicated that the India-Russia relationship is headed downwards. In his remarks, he revealed that Russia was the first country to declare strategic partnership with India and also quoted President Putin as saying, “There would never be alternatives to relations with India”. The strategic partnership with Russia gave an impulse to defence cooperation. However prior to 2014, enhanced nuclear and defence cooperation with the U.S stimulated slackening of India-Russia nuclear ties. “What affected Russia most was that some of the stances India took in the United Nations Security Council as a non-permanent member aligned more with Western powers. Especially in the case of Syria, India’s stance was inconsistent with its past position on Syria” he added. All this gave rise to a feeling that there existed U.S influence against India-Russia relations. He further highlighted that there is no reason for concern in the bilateral relationship as post 2014, the nuclear cooperation between the two nations has enhanced, with considerable progress being made in the economic initiatives. Measures such as science and technology commission being opened to ensure proper transfer of technology and machinery from Russia to India and enhancing of bilateral trade through the North and South Corridor speak volumes about the importance that the bilateral relationship between India and Russia holds. Further, an FTA with Eurasian Economic Union has also been signed,

accelerating the range of developments in the last 3 years. On the Nuclear Energy Cooperation, a Strategic Vision has been signed along with setting up of nuclear plants. Russia also plans a \$1 billion India joint fund to attract investment opportunities in India. He also emphasized on the fact that there has been no indication that India is moving away from Russia and the strategic relationship between the two nations has to move beyond defence and nuclear cooperation. The shared strategic outlook in a multipolar world where strategic partnership is defined by core economic, security and diplomatic needs underlines the significance of the buoyant Russia-India bilateral relationship.

**About Ananta Aspen Centre:**

Engaging India, Nurturing Change Ananta Aspen Centre is an educational and policy studies organisation based in New Delhi. It focusses on values based leadership and open dialogue on challenges facing Indian society to help foster its transformation. The Centre engages civil society, business, governments and other key stakeholders to share ideas and bring a wide range of perspectives on issues important to India's development, foreign policy, strategic affairs and national security. Ananta Aspen Centre is an independent non-profit organization registered under the Indian Trusts Act and under 12A and 80G of the Income Tax Act.

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