

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE INDIAN COMMUNITY RECEPTION IN GUINEA**

Conakry, August 3, 2019

1. Before I begin, let me introduce the distinguished members of my delegation - Shri Pratap Chandra Sarangi, Minister of State for Micro Small and Medium Enterprises & Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries, Government of India, he hails from Odisha; and Shri Dilip Ghosh, Member of Parliament from West Bengal in the Lok Sabha. I convey my warm wishes to all of you. I thank you for welcoming me with such warmth and affection. My State Visit to Guinea is a historic one. This is the first ever visit at the level of Head of State from India to this country. Prior to coming here, I also visited Benin and The Gambia. My three-nation tour is reflective of our new commitment to enhance our ties with the West African region and with Africa in general.
2. आप सभी से मिलकर मुझे अत्यंत प्रसन्नता हुई है। मैं आप सभी को यह बताना चाहता हूँ कि मैंने जिस भी देश की यात्रा की है, उस देश में रह रहे भारतीय समुदाय से मिलने को मैंने हमेशा प्राथमिकता दी है। विदेशों में रह रहे अपने लोगों से मिलने का आनंद अलग ही होता है और ये सुखद मुलाकातें मेरी स्मृति का हिस्सा बन जाती हैं।
3. आप जानते ही हैं कि इस क्षेत्र के हर देश में भारतीय समुदाय के लोग फल-फूल रहे हैं। भारत और दुनिया के इस हिस्से के बीच वे सक्रिय सेतुबंध की भूमिका निभाते रहे हैं। अफ्रीका महाद्वीप में हमने जो 18 नई एम्बेसी खोलने का निर्णय लिया है, उन में 7 एम्बेसी पश्चिम अफ्रीका क्षेत्र में खोली जानी हैं। इससे हमारे सम्बन्ध और मज़बूत बनेंगे। इस वर्ष की शुरुआत

में, गिनी गणराज्य में हमारी एम्बेसी ने काम करना शुरू कर दिया है। यह एम्बेसी आपकी है और मुझे विश्वास है कि इस देश के अपने अनुभवों तथा स्थानीय जानकारी के बल पर आप सब इसे मजबूती देंगे।

Ladies and gentlemen,

4. Yesterday, I met President Alpha Conde and discussed ways to promote Guinea-India relations. He conferred on me Guinea's highest award - the National Order of Merit. This conferment is symbolic of the respect and regard that this country has for India and Indians including you. We are mutually keen to strengthen and diversify our relations particularly, our economic ties. Given the complementary strengths of India and Guinea, there are numerous opportunities in trade and investment and for businesses to grow both ways. Development cooperation is a key element in our engagement with Guinea, from healthcare, fight against Ebola, agriculture, transport to energy security. To deepen it further, yesterday we offered a concessional finance assistance of US\$ 170 million to fund water projects in Guinea. We are also keen to implement several solar energy projects under the International Solar Alliance, where we see Guinea as an important partner. I am happy that our commitment to support growth and development in Guinea is also demonstrated by our private sector. I am told that a large 300-bed Guinea Friendship Hospital is being built by an Indian entity. This project will go a long way in providing modern healthcare services to our friends in Guinea.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. I am pleased to learn that the Indian Community in Guinea, though small in number, is vibrant and making significant contribution to the progress of this country. Through your enterprise and business acumen, you have established a strong trading presence here. Some of you have made investment in key sectors, both social and economic, creating new opportunities for the youth in Guinea. There are still

others who have come here as professionals and technocrats and are supporting the local economy. In whatever capacity you may be here, each one of you has earned respect and a name for yourself and for India. We are, indeed, proud of you and your success.

6. As a country, we are an ancient civilization with rich cultural heritage. I am happy that staying far away from India, you have preserved and nurtured your traditions and festivals. You had also celebrated the International Day of Yoga on 21 June this year in Conakry with much fervour. With our Embassy firmly established in Conakry now, you can do a lot more to promote cultural interaction between India and Guinea. This year we are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation. We look forward to your participation and support to make it a success in Conakry.

Ladies and gentlemen,

7. As you know, recently we held parliamentary elections in India. The new government has received a strong and decisive mandate. In keeping with this, we have redoubled our efforts to usher in transformational changes in India. We have set a target to become a 5 trillion dollar economy in the next 7 years. Along with growth, we are also committed to distributing the fruits of development to every section of our society and foster social change. Make in India for manufacturing, Digital India for digital connectivity, MUDRA for microfinance, Ayushman Bharat for health insurance and Beti Bachao- Beti Padhao for women empowerment are some of our flagship schemes for inclusive and sustainable development. These are bearing appreciable results.
8. We see our Diaspora as an integral part of our transformative journey. Through your ideas, enterprise and on-ground presence in Guinea, you can foster growth and development in India. We also want to strengthen our connect with you. Our initiatives such as the Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, Bharat Ko

Janiye Quiz and Know India Programme have been most helpful in this regard. We have also taken measures for efficient delivery of passport, consular and OCI services. Our Embassies have been mandated to provide round the clock service to those in need. We have made effective use of social media to reach out to people in distress. We have, indeed, left no stone unturned in helping our brothers and sisters abroad. Over the last 5 years, we have evacuated over 90,000 Indians, along with nationals of around 50 other countries, caught in humanitarian disasters and other such situations overseas. We are there for you and will stand by you, firmly and strongly, when you need us.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. I would like to reiterate how happy I am that you have made a mark for yourself in this country and done India proud. Indeed, you have been the true cultural ambassadors of India. Please continue to carry India's message of peace, harmony and goodwill to the world. I wish you success in your professional and personal endeavours.

10. Before I conclude, I invite you to visit Rashtrapati Bhavan when you are in Delhi next. It may be my official residence, but it belongs to all Indians. It is part of our heritage and pride. And finally, I take this opportunity to thank the government and people of Guinea for their love, affection and support for you as a community. I hope this bond of friendship and mutual trust between our nations and peoples grows stronger with time.

Thank You!