

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED BY KING OF SWAZILAND**

April 9, 2018

1. Allow me to begin, Your Majesty, by thanking you for your gracious words of welcome and your warm hospitality. It is an honour for me to be paying the first ever State Visit from India to Swaziland. Today, indeed, is a special and historic day for our bilateral ties.

2. We have been charmed by the sheer beauty of the Swazi landscape. We had heard that nature has blessed Your Majesty's Kingdom with a generous hand, but the actual experience has far exceeded our expectations.

3. Your Majesty, Swaziland and India are very different countries in terms of size and population. However, we are similar in many ways. Both our countries are deeply attached to our ancient traditions. At the same time, we also aspire to technological advances for accelerating the material progress of our populations. It is this unique combination of modernity and tradition that unites us.

4. For both our countries, our ancient values and traditions provide the anchor that keeps us rooted and stable, even as we navigate the opportunities and challenges of a fast changing world. Your Majesty, it is this ability to embrace modernity while safeguarding one's identity that I see in Your Majesty's 'Vision 2022' programme, aimed at transforming your Kingdom into a developed nation within the next five years. It is a bold and ambitious vision, and I convey my very best wishes to the Kingdom of Swaziland for its successful realisation. I can assure you that India would feel privileged to be a partner in your developmental journey. We stand ready to share the lessons of our own development experience in areas like agriculture, health, education, institution-building, infrastructure and tourism.

5. Ladies and Gentlemen, we have a special connect with Swaziland and

with Africa. Our ties with this continent run deep. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation, learnt his political ropes and the power of non-violent struggle in your neighbouring country, South Africa. Our people to people ties have continued to build on this shared legacy.

6. Your Majesty, we were privileged by your presence at the India-Africa Forum Summit in 2015. You subsequently honoured us again with a visit last year. These interactions have given a new momentum to our bilateral relationship, and I am hopeful that my State Visit will further accelerate our partnership.

7. Excellencies, I see great potential for India and Swaziland to collaborate in the future. In many ways, our needs and capacities are complementary. India can offer to Swaziland investments, affordable technologies and development assistance. On the other hand, your agriculture and your mineral resources could find a sustainable market in India. Drawing upon our age-old practices, we can also combine the benefits of Ayurveda with your traditional medicine and provide sustainable living choices to many. I am happy that Yoga is fast becoming popular in this country. Indeed, we have the potential to truly forge a win-win partnership.

8. Your Majesty, I know that you share the same ambition and vision for our relationship. Let us make the Swazi-India partnership a model of Indo-African cooperation.

9. On this optimistic note, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you to join me in raising a toast:

- To the health and happiness of His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the Queen Mother;
- To the continued progress and prosperity of the Swazi people;
- and to enduring and ever-strengthening friendship between the Kingdom of Swaziland and the Republic of India.

Thank you.
