

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE STATE BANQUET HOSTED BY GOVERNOR GENERAL
OF JAMAICA**

Kingston, May 17, 2022

Thank you for the warm welcome extended to me and to my delegation on my first State visit to Jamaica. This is also the first ever State visit by an Indian President to Jamaica as we mark 60 years of our diplomatic relations.

The Most Hon'ble Governor General,

Jamaica has a very special place in India and among our people. On 10th May 1845, more than 175 years ago, a ship carrying about 200 Indians landed in Jamaica. Since then, Indians from all walks of life have been coming to this beautiful country and making it their home. You don't have to go very far to see this.

Excellency,

Your invitees sitting in front of me today are a testament to the fact that Indians have blended seamlessly in the Jamaican society, much like our plants and trees which they brought with them. That Lady Allen also has an Indian lineage confirms that even King's House has also been taken in the cultural embrace. And this embrace has been mutual. Excellency! Names of cricket-icons like George Headley, Michael Holding and Chris Gayle are admired by generations of cricket lovers in India. And as you know, Indians are also passionate about cricket, which binds our geographically distant countries very close. The greatness of Usain Bolt is well known to Indian sports lovers.

Excellency,

It is not just our diaspora which connects us closely to Jamaica. Jamaican popular culture has also charmed India and the world.

Indians have been captivated by the tunes of Reggae music, even if many of them have never visited Jamaica. It is also inspiring to watch Jamaica racing ahead of other nations in the medals tally at the Olympics. If there ever will be a ranking of nations in terms sporting influence, Jamaica will surely be up there.

Excellency,

We deeply appreciate your commitment and the importance you attach to our bilateral relations. India and Jamaica are natural partners in many ways. As strong and vibrant democracies, as countries which seek ethical market practices and as countries with respect for an inclusive, equitable, stable, secure and rules-based international order, it is logical for us to work together. This is all the more important when the global order is in a flux and tensions are on the rise in many parts of the world.

Excellency,

Trade and economic cooperation are vital pillars of our friendship. We see our economies complementing each other, not just for trade, but also to transform our economies through the digital revolution. With its strategic position and skilled manpower, Jamaica has the potential to be the 'knowledge highway' in this region, catering to the needs of the large economies nearby. And in doing that, Jamaica will always find a willing partner in India.

We must get our young minds to work jointly in several fields like Artificial Intelligence and Robotics, Jamaican traditional medicine and Ayurveda, and in building together a climate-smart world. We must capture their imagination and energy to build a society that is prosperous, progressive and peaceful.

On this note, Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, let me wish the Most Hon'ble Governor General, the First Lady and the people of Jamaica and India, health, success and happiness, and even greater strength to the India-Jamaica friendship.

Thank you!

