

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED IN THE HONOUR OF
THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES
MR IBRAHIM MOHAMED SOLIH**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, December 17, 2018

1. I warmly welcome you Mr. President and Madam First Lady to India. India ah Maruhaba!
2. We are honoured that you have chosen to visit us on your first State Visit as President of Maldives. I am also delighted at your acceptance of our invitation to stay at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. These, indeed, affirm our special ties and close friendship.

Excellency,

3. The people of India rejoiced in your victory in the recent elections. We welcome and support the aspirations of the people of Maldives to usher in a new era of democracy in your country. The visit of our Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi to witness your historic swearing-in ceremony as a special guest demonstrates the importance we both attach to our friendship.
4. India accords the highest importance to its relations with Maldives and wishes to see a democratic, stable, prosperous and peaceful Maldives. As your Government embarks on its journey to fulfill the mandate given to you by your people, India assures you of all possible support in your endeavour, as a true and steadfast friend.
5. We deeply appreciate your vision of inclusive development based on the laudable principles of good governance. Your government's vision of a transparent and rules-based approach to growth and development has given a boost to investor confidence in your country. We compliment your government's ambitious plan to

transform the lives of the Maldivian people by giving a human face to the task of economic development. We would be privileged to work with you in support of your national plans and priorities outlined in your 100 days agenda.

Excellency,

6. As close neighbours, we share deep-rooted historical bonds of friendship, goodwill and mutual understanding. Our two people have, indeed, been at the centre of our special ties. We have shared with each other culture and customs, food and folk tales. And we have together enjoyed the magic and melody of Bollywood, and as much the exhilaration and excitement of cricket. I am happy that the agreement and understanding we have reached today will further get our people together, as friends, as stakeholders and as partners.

Excellency,

7. Peace and security in the Indian Ocean region is our shared responsibility. Terrorism, piracy and drug trafficking are a constant threat to our peace-loving society. India stands ready to work with Maldives to strengthen maritime security and to bring progress and prosperity to our people.
8. We are encouraged by your government's decision to rejoin the Commonwealth. We will work together with Maldives to facilitate and expedite the process. We also welcome Maldives into the family of the Indian Ocean Rim Association as its newest member. Maldives has always played an important role in the international fora. We invite you to join the International Solar Alliance and strengthen global efforts to tackle Climate Change.
9. Excellency, India remains committed to a relationship of abiding friendship with Maldives, founded on mutual trust, respect and goodwill, today and always.

Varah Bodah Shukuriyya. Thank you.