

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED IN HONOUR OF
THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARGENTINA**

Rashtrapati Bhavan, February 18, 2019

1. I warmly welcome you, Mr. President and your esteemed delegation on your State Visit to India. This is a very special year for our bilateral ties. We are celebrating 70 years of our diplomatic relations. We are, indeed, honored that you have chosen to visit us on this momentous occasion.

2. This year we are also celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation. We deeply appreciate the respect that your country and people have shown to his life and legacy. I recall Argentine President Dr. Arturo Frondizi, the first Head of State from Latin America to have visited India, in 1961, who told us that while in prison he read the autobiography of Mahatma Gandhi, for inspiration, for hope and for sustenance. Mr. President, we are equally delighted to learn of your personal admiration of Mahatma Gandhi. It strengthens our collective belief in his universal legacy, and those of San Martin, whom we have given a permanent place in our hearts and in our Capital.

3. An even older connect between our two countries was forged by Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore when he visited Argentina in 1924. The days he spent in Argentina and the enriching deliberations he had with Victoria Ocampo has been so beautifully captured in the film '*Thinking of Him*'.

4. Mr. President, we may be located in continents afar but our people and ideas have brought us close. We understand the

depth of your intellectual traditions, of Borges and Carlos Gardel, and you the introspection of our philosophy, of Bhagwat Gita and yoga. We are beholden by the skills of Maradona and Messi, and you by the magic of bollywood. Mr. President, the embrace of the Tango and the Tabla could not be warmer!

5. Mr. President, over the last 70 years, our engagement in various spheres of human endeavor has grown several-fold. Trade and technology, agriculture and Antarctic science, cyberspace and satellites are propelling our relations. India's transformative growth and Argentine capabilities are creating new opportunities for us. We are both committed to South-South solidarity and we are together working to create more space for our people in global governance. In this context, India looks forward to contributing meaningfully to the "Review of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action" next month.
6. Mr. President, our multilateral partnership is bearing results. I commend your leadership of the G-20. We also remain grateful to you for supporting our accession to the various technology regimes and for standing by us for our membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group. And as we both reinforce our pledge to tackle climate change, I am happy that we will work as a team to strengthen the International Solar Alliance.
7. Mr. President, terrorism poses the gravest threat to humanity today. As long-standing friends and as trusted partners, we must come together, firmly and decisively, to destroy and defeat terrorism, to protect our present and to secure our future.
8. Mr. President, we are both polo playing nations, and we are both world-beaters in the game of hockey. I am delighted that we have today committed to bring the energy and enthusiasm of the sporting arena to the bilateral turf! May our Strategic Partnership bring peace and progress for one and all.

9. On that optimistic note Excellencies, I propose a toast to:

- The good health and well-being of the President and First Lady of Argentina;
- The prosperity of the people of Argentina; and
- The ever-lasting friendship between India and Argentina.

Muchas Gracias. Thank you.
