

**REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED IN HIS HONOUR BY THE PRESIDENT
OF PHILIPPINES**

Manila, October 18, 2019

1. Mr. President, at the outset, let me say how profoundly touched I am by the warmth of the reception accorded to me and to my delegation. I thank you for your generous words and the kind sentiments expressed – sentiments that I fully reciprocate. This year is a landmark in our bilateral journey. I have undertaken this State visit to the Philippines to celebrate the 70th anniversary of our diplomatic relations and to yet again commit ourselves to the Philippines-India bilateral partnership.
2. Our relations are warm and friendly, based as they are on our shared values and outlook. We are both democracies that believe in the sovereign equality of nations and respect for and adherence to international law.
3. We are forward looking partners ever committed to peace and prosperity for our peoples and for the world at large. We have just witnessed the conclusion of several key agreements. The breadth and scope of these understandings speak of our growing collaboration.
4. And even as we look to the future, we are keen to trace our old civilizational links. I have no doubt that there exists a rich tapestry of our shared heritage waiting to be researched and documented. The discovery of the statue of Tara in Agusan and the commonality in our languages and thought speak of vibrant cultural exchanges in the ancient past. And much to our delight, our contemporary cultural attributes, be it music or dance, Karaoke or Kathak, continue to bring our two peoples closer.

5. Excellency, despite the global economic slowdown, both India and the Philippines are registering appreciable growth. Our bilateral trade and investment, our collaboration in science and technology, our cooperation in human resource development and, of course, our cultural exchanges, will continue to add new energy and momentum to our ties.

6. Excellency, in the past three years of your Presidency, this is the third high-level exchange between our two countries – after our Prime Minister’s visit to Manila in 2017 and your own visit to India in 2018. We deeply appreciate your commitment and attention to relations with India. For us too, the Philippines is of growing importance as a partner in the Indo-Pacific and we are keen to take this relationship to a new level.

7. On that optimistic note, Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in a toast:
 - To the good health, happiness and success of President Duterte and Madam First Lady;
 - To the peace, prosperity and progress of the friendly people of the Philippines; and
 - To the ever-growing bonds of friendship between our two countries.

Maraming Salamat! Thank you!