

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
AT THE INDIA-PHILIPPINES BUSINESS CONCLAVE AND 4<sup>TH</sup>  
INDIA-ASEAN BUSINESS SUMMIT**

**October 19 2019, Manila**

1. I am pleased to address the India-Philippines Business Conclave and the 4<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-India Business Summit. I thank the business organisations and government bodies from the Philippines and India for organising today's event.
2. This is my first State Visit to the Philippines. I am here to mark and celebrate 70 years of the Philippines-India diplomatic relations. Yesterday, I had wide-ranging discussions with President Duterte. We agreed to take forward and broaden our bilateral ties, in particular trade and economic relations. The Philippines is our natural partner in the ASEAN region. In recent years, we have seen an up-swing in bilateral trade and investment. We need to not just maintain the present momentum but to accelerate it further.
3. The potential for the Philippines-India economic collaboration is significant. Both countries share mutual complementarities which can be utilised to deepen trade and investment ties. Both India and the Philippines are among the fastest growing economies; both possess large, young and aspirational population; both are invested in new technologies, innovation and start-ups; both are services powerhouse; and both are committed to inclusive growth, fighting corruption and bringing about transformative changes in people's life.
4. India's "Make in India" and next-generation infrastructure programmes and the Philippines' "Build, Build, Build" infrastructure initiative present immense opportunities for companies and investors on both sides. In the coming years, India will be spending about 1.3 trillion US dollars to develop next-generation infrastructure, from Smart cities, ports,

airports, expressways to digital i-ways. A focussed business approach which combines investors with opportunities, and partnerships with projects, is the way forward. I am happy that your deliberations earlier today have been most helpful on this score.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. The Philippines-India business story is an encouraging one. While bilateral trade has shown continuous progress, the real gain has been our collaboration in the IT-BPO segment. Leading Indian IT majors have set up enterprises in Manila creating job opportunities for the youth and value addition for the global economy. As we race into the digital age, we have immense opportunities before us to fill e-commerce shelves, create fin-tech services, develop imaginative entertainment platforms, and power green and clean solutions.
  
6. In recent years, we have seen two-way investment grow in infrastructure and energy sectors. More prospects wait to be converted into concrete projects, from airport terminals, LNG pipelines to waste management solutions. The Indian pharma and healthcare sectors offer immense value to the Philippines. And while Indian tourists to the Philippines continue to grow, medical tourist numbers from here to India are also on the rise. Our world class healthcare services at affordable cost are bringing joy to people's lives in this country. There is scope to enhance partnership in several other areas - from trade, investment, services, agriculture, engineering to new technologies.

Ladies and gentlemen,

7. I just gave you a snapshot of the Philippines-India business collaboration. Philippines' economic dynamism and India's growth call for greater and deeper engagement. India is the sixth largest economy in the world today. We have set a target to become a 5 trillion dollar economy by 2025. India's economic and business environment is undergoing a transformation like never before. We have undertaken path-

breaking taxation and banking reforms. Our sustained reform efforts have led to a spectacular jump of 65 places for India on the World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index. We have also moved 44 ranks on the Logistics Performance Index. We have worked hard to strengthen the IPR regime. Most recently, we have slashed corporate tax rate to boost growth and investment. As a result of our efforts, in the last 5 years, we have received FDI worth 286 billion US dollars. This is half of India's total FDI inflow in the last 20 years.

8. India is following a strong growth path. But we are equally conscious of equity. To distribute the fruits of development, we have undertaken the world's largest financial inclusion initiative under which over 370 million people, at the bottom of the pyramid, have been made bankable. Small and medium enterprises have a major role to play in the Philippines and Indian economies. A major constraint for small entrepreneurs is the lack of collateral for finance. Last year alone, under our MUDRA scheme we disbursed collateral free loans worth 44 billion US dollars. Our two countries have much to share and learn from each other, even as we do our best to promote the Small and Medium Enterprises segment.
9. India is home to the third largest Start-up network in the world with over 21,000 enterprises. The Philippines is also making significant progress in innovation and entrepreneurship sectors. I am told that the GO NEGOSYO movement in the Philippines has made significant contribution to fostering new enterprises. I had the pleasure of presenting India's Padma Shri award to Presidential Advisor for Entrepreneurship, Mr. Jose Conception present here, in New Delhi last year for his work in this field. Secretary Lopez has also provided valuable support to the initiative. I am happy that the 2<sup>nd</sup> ASEAN-India Innovation and Technology Summit is taking place in Davao in November 2019. I wish the Summit all success.

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. ASEAN-India relations are special. Our “Act East” policy puts this region at the centre of our engagement with the Indo-Pacific. Last year, I had the honour to host Heads of State and Government from all the ASEAN countries as Guest of Honour at our Republic Day celebrations. The ASEAN is one of the most economically dynamic regions of the world today. We have deep political and people-to-people relations with each and every country in the ASEAN. We wish to bring our economic and business relations up to the same level.

11. ASEAN-India trade has jumped significantly in the past few years. Last year alone, the trade increased by 19 per cent to reach 96.79 billion US dollars. However, we still have a long distance to cover to reach the target of 200 billion US dollars by 2022. Effective use of existing mechanisms, particularly the ASEAN-India Business Council can go a long way in realizing this goal. Just as Indian companies see significant opportunities in the region, I am sure the ASEAN business community also recognises the tremendous business potential in India. India wishes to participate in your growth story and we invite all of the ASEAN to participate in ours.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. Today’s event embodies the spirit of both bilateral partnership and regional cooperation. I am confident that your discussions today will contribute to further strengthening of not just the Philippines-India business ties, but ASEAN-India trade and investment relations as well. I wish you success in your future endeavours.

Maraming Salamat! Thank you!