

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED BY THE PRESIDENT OF SURINAME, MR
DESIRE DELANO BOUTERSE**

Suriname, June 20, 2018

1. I thank you for your gracious words of welcome and your warm hospitality. It is an honour for me to be the First President of India to visit Suriname. Today, indeed, is a special and historic day for our bilateral ties.
2. Our natural affinities and close people-to-people ties have brought us together. Stories of Suriname, of your lush green landscape and your warmth and affection abound in India. But what I have seen and experienced since my arrival here has far exceeded our expectations. I must say you have made my visit truly special.
3. Mr. President, in our talks this morning we have committed ourselves to enhance and deepen our friendship. It has been a singular honour for me to address the Extraordinary Session of your Parliament, and to pay my deepest respects at your national monuments.

Excellency,

4. We share many things in common. Both our countries are multi-religious and multi-cultural; we both are deeply attached to our ancient traditions. Our age-old values provide the anchor that keeps us rooted and stable, even as we navigate the opportunities and challenges of a fast-changing world.
5. Your country, Mr. President, is part of the “New World”. People and ideas from far and wide have mingled here. Whoever came to these shores soon became your own. I pay my deepest respects to your people for this togetherness. In that context, I find it a truly humbling experience to have set foot in your captivating country among the celebration of the 145th Anniversary of the arrival of Indians in

Suriname. This glorious chapter of our shared history shall ever remain a source of strength for both of us.

Excellency,

6. Our two countries have an engaging relationship. Development Partnership, cultural collaboration and close people-to-people ties have laced it with many achievements. Many more are waiting to be accomplished.
7. I see high potential to enhance our trade and investment relations. Agriculture, tourism, forestry, mining, energy and health are areas which we need to explore.
8. I am happy that we have made a new beginning in the field of solar energy today. As two countries deeply committed to protecting the environment, be it the rich rain forests of the Amazon or the sacred River Ganga, we have to act together, to save our tomorrow and to give our future generations what rightfully belongs to them.
9. I am thankful to Suriname for supporting the International Solar Alliance. Your presence is a source of strength to us and to the global community in our common quest to tackle climate change.

Excellency,

10. As we talk of our shared future, we must also focus on our youth. They can do many things together. They can collaborate over cyber space or in understanding the benefits of Ayurveda and Yoga. Tomorrow, the world would be celebrating the International Day of Yoga. I am happy Mr. President that you will be joining me in celebrating this special day dedicated to yoga. Yoga may have originated in India, but today is part of our shared global heritage. To our delight, this will be the first time ever that two Heads of State will jointly be celebrating the International Day of Yoga. I invite all of you to join us as well in our quest to be healthier and to be at peace with our inner self.

Excellency,

11. As friends we have come a long way since we travelled together. Today, we have agreed to an ambitious roadmap for the future. Let us work for stronger Suriname - India relations. Let us be united in Friendship. "Foorwaarts in Vriendschap".

12. On this optimistic note, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, please join me in raising a toast:

- To the health and happiness of President and First Lady of Suriname ;
- To the continued progress and prosperity of the people Suriname;
- And to enduring and everlasting friendship between the Republic of Suriname and the Republic of India.

Thank you!