

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

**Rashtrapati Bhavan : 20.09.2019**

1. Excellency, I warmly welcome you on your State Visit to India. It is a singular honour for me to host you and your esteemed delegation. You have made it even more special for us by accepting my invitation to stay at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Our ancient traditions teach us to be not just warm and welcoming to our guests, but to honour them with the spirit of "*Atithi Devo Bhava*", that is to respect guests like God. We are grateful that you have given us this special opportunity to celebrate our age-old friendship.
2. India and Mongolia share close civilisational ties. Buddhist heritage and spiritual traditions bind us together. We also share the ideals of democracy and freedom. Your visit is an important milestone in our Strategic Partnership. Its outcome and its warmth shall keep our friendship glowing.
3. Excellency, our centuries-old people-to-people exchanges have been the bedrock of our ties. Buddhist monks and traders from India traveled to Mongolia with the message of peace, harmony and friendship. Similarly, over the ages, Mongolian scholars and pilgrims came to India in pursuit of Buddhist studies and spiritual blessings. This ageless tradition continues. India, today, is privileged to host around 800 Mongolian students engaged in Buddhist studies.
4. Mr. President, we both have done well to preserve our Buddhist ties and take them forward. A few days ago our two countries organized SAMVAD THREE: the Global Dialogue for Peaceful Co-existence, Inter-religious understanding and Inter-dependent sustainability. Excellency, this morning you and my Prime Minister jointly unveiled the statue of Lord Buddha at the historic Gandan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar. May he ever guide and bless us.
5. Excellency, India and Mongolia are not just "spiritual neighbours" but strategic partners as well. We appreciate your 'third neighbour' policy. Our convergence of views on global issues makes our Strategic Partnership deep and meaningful.
6. Since the historic visit of my Prime Minister to Mongolia in 2015, our cooperation in diverse fields including defence, security, culture, IT, space and renewable energy has deepened. We are happy to partner Mongolia for capacity building and training. The Oil Refinery Project being built by us in Mongolia will stand as a shining example of our development partnership.

7. Excellency, Mongolia has given the world many values. Your nomadic culture and your love for nature have deeply influenced both the eastern and western thought. You have combined material culture with spiritual well-being, as none other. Where else but in Mongolia, do we find the speed of the horse and the mark of the archer being balanced by peaceful spiritual traditions and the power of the deep meditative mind. We all have, indeed, learnt a lot from you.

8. Excellency, India remains committed to working with the Government and people of Mongolia to further strengthen and expand our Strategic Partnership for the prosperity of our two peoples.

9. Excellency, I wish you a fulfilling stay in India. I am confident that your State Visit will add yet another glorious chapter to our historic ties. May our friendship ever grow and prosper in the divine shade of the Mahabodhi tree!

**Thank you**