

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA
CELEBRATIONS IN SURINAME**

Suriname, June 21, 2018

1. A very good morning to all of you. It is my privilege to be celebrating the International Day of Yoga amid the breathtaking beauty of Suriname. Your country and your hospitality have been both charming and calming. I cannot think of a more appropriate location to practice yoga. My privilege is enhanced because of the generous gesture of President Bouterse and Vice-President Ashwin Adhin in having agreed to be part of this commemoration.

2. Nowhere else in the world today, and on no previous International Day of Yoga, have two heads of state been co-participants. This is a unique event. And Mr President let me tell you that friends who do yoga together are true friends – they always stay friends.

3. Yoga is an ancient Indian tradition, but it does not belong to India alone. It is part of humanity's intangible heritage. Millions across the world, in every continent and among all communities, have embraced yoga and interpreted yoga in their own way. The practice of yoga has had a beneficial impact on their bodies as well as their minds. Particularly in today's world of stresses and life-style diseases, yoga can help all of us.

4. On India's urging, and with unanimous support of all members of the United Nations, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution to mark June 21 as the International Day of Yoga. The first International Day of Yoga was celebrated in 2015. Since then, the passion for yoga has spread even further and even wider.

Today, along with Suriname and India, the fourth International Day of Yoga is being celebrated in practically every country in the world. To my mind, yoga is the ultimate expression of Indian soft power. It has won us love and affection among yoga practitioners in all corners of the planet, including of course here in Suriname.

5. Yoga embodies the symbiotic relationship of mind and body; and of thought and action. It promotes harmony between human beings and nature, a sentiment that is so much at home in the culture of Suriname. It promotes a holistic approach to health and wellbeing. In our complex world, with a bewildering range of public health challenges and diseases, governments and health agencies face a tough task in ensuring the wellbeing of people. A multipronged approach and a combination of treatment and prevention are necessary. I would say that yoga needs to be part of the mix. It is a low or no investment tool for keeping our people healthy and avoiding many common ailments.
6. The benefits of yoga must also spur us, in different countries and cultures, to explore traditional wisdom and consider how this could be useful for the modern age – or simply repackaged for our times. Many societies, including Suriname and India, have a wealth of traditional knowledge to offer. During my visit here, our countries have come to an agreement on cooperation in ayurveda and traditional medicine. Here too there is much for us to learn and adopt. And I am confident that we can do it together.
7. It has been an absolute honour to have visited Suriname and interacted with President Bouterse and his colleagues in the government, as well as with the friendly people of your wonderful country. As I leave, I will take back with me many, many

memories. But the memory of celebrating the International Day of Yoga in your beautiful country will always remain. I can never forget this day. Thank you so much Mr President, thank you everybody. My best wishes to all of you present here and to all the people of Suriname.