

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW INDIA BUSINESS
SUMMIT**

Sydney, November 22, 2018

1. I am happy to be here to speak at the Australian Financial Review India Business Summit. I thank the organisers for the invitation to address Australia's leading businesspersons and thought leaders. This is my first visit to your country in my capacity as the President of India and I am thankful too for the wonderful reception accorded by the Governor-General, the Prime Minister and the government and people of Australia. Coming to this beautiful city and savouring its scenic harbour, it has been easy to understand why people are so quickly charmed by Sydney – and by Australia.
2. I must acknowledge the presence of Prime Minister Scott Morrison. We met this morning and had a meaningful conversation. I appreciate his leadership of Australia and commitment to the relationship with India, as well as his encouraging words on the recently released "India Economic Strategy". About a week ago, in Singapore, he met our Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, and my visit takes forward our dialogue, discussion and cooperation. I gather that Prime Minister Morrison has a taste for Indian food and in fact cooks a mean curry. I am sure he can help us come up with a recipe for even better Australia-India relations.
3. Australia and India are united by a history of shared sacrifice on the beaches of Gallipoli; a shared vision for the peace and prosperity of a free, open and rules-based Indo-Pacific Region; a shared instinct for entrepreneurship; a shared hope for a prosperous and yet eco-friendly and environmentally sustainable planet; and a shared passion for cricket. For many Indian cricket fans, Australia is their favourite team – except

when you are playing India but especially when you are competing for the Ashes. There are other attributes we share as well – the values of democracy, pluralism and human dignity, the English language – and the belief that at the simplest, most basic level, business, trade and technology must change lives of those sections of society who need change the most.

4. Our countries have been among the beneficiaries of globalisation. Australia's economy has expanded strongly in the past quarter-century. In this period, India's economic integration with the global business system too has strengthened. In the ultimate analysis, a process such as globalisation is most meaningful when it helps the range of global stakeholders – from international corporations to local communities, whether in Australia or India. In recent years, India has renewed its commitment to a liberal, transparent and globalised economy. In terms of openness to foreign capital and international investors, India is in the top league. Business sector after business sector, from aviation to mining to defence production, has had doors thrown open to global players and investors.
5. Such steps have been complemented by other initiatives at home. India is in the midst of an infrastructure push of unusual urgency. A determined accretion in highway construction; a nationwide urban and rural broadband rollout; creating new railway and freight corridors; an ambitious programme of modernising ports; high-speed train networks in major urban centres; expanding air connectivity using upgraded as well as greenfield airports; industrial corridors that are gathering momentum – the buzz of construction is everywhere. Large cranes and armies of workers in hard hats dot the Indian landscape. India is in business.
6. India's growth is different from that of many others. We are the first major country that is seeking to make that leap into industrialisation while also combating climate change, and

while reducing the intensity of dependence on fossil fuels. I will not bore you with statistics – in the context of India, they are always large and impressive – but there is one number I want to share with you. India has set itself a target of 175 gigawatts of renewable energy by 2022, of which 100 gigawatts will comprise solar energy. We are on course to not just achieving that target but exceeding it.

7. Fiscal and regulatory processes have also been significantly revamped. A little over a year ago India inaugurated the Goods and Services Tax regime. This has brought the 29 states of our country on a common tax platform. It is already making for a cleaner and more structured business system. In parallel, on the World Bank Ease of Doing Business Index India has moved up from a rank of 142 in 2014 to 77 in 2018. This 65 step jump is the biggest for any single country.
8. All of these measures – fiscal and regulatory, infrastructure promotion and investment policy – are aimed at making India even more of a hub for new, exciting and global businesses. These could be in manufacturing and services, in agricultural industries as well as emerging technologies. Our Make in India programme is gathering pace. It aims to promote India as a design, fabrication and manufacture location – not in isolation, for that is neither possible nor desirable, but as part of global and Indo-Pacific value chains. I am happy to note that mass-transit rail coaches made in India have recently been exported to Australia. From textiles to automobiles there are so many other made-in-India products in which we could interest you.
9. The international business community has responded to India's achievements with appreciable investment. In financial year 2017-18, India drew about US\$ 62 billion. This was an acknowledgement of India's honest and reformist efforts – and of its high GDP growth. In the previous quarter, for instance, our economy grew by 8.2 per cent.

10. An underlying theme of economic and social transformation in India is the role of technology and innovation. India's traditional strength in IT is well-known. There are many Indian IT companies that have invested in Australia itself, adding value to companies and clients here and employing young Australians. In India, technology is acquiring a wider base as well as climbing up the chain. A start-up culture that is the world's third largest has made entrepreneurs of young students and led to businesses being incubated on campuses, in small homes, and even little farms, where the farmer is using her excess produce to negotiate a better price in a larger market. Inevitably, India's digital economy, its e-commerce companies, its technology start-ups and its fin-tech innovators are attracting FDI.
11. Frankly the big country and big friend that we are not seeing as much of, in the India investment story, is Australia. This is a gap we need to address. Australia and India have too much at stake in each other to not up their game. We can collaborate and benefit from each other's expertise in fin-tech and logistics, in industrial design and biotech, in the capital markets and in farm-to-fork management of the food chain – even in space tech and satellite launch services, where India's long-standing space programme will be happy to support the new Australian Space Agency. It's not that Australian companies are not present in India – it's just that there is still enormous room for us to work together.
12. The Indian market offers Australian companies and investors a huge consumer base and the prospect of considerable returns. Australian super-funds or pension funds have a reputation for careful, calibrated investment decisions. They will find the Indian infrastructure space worth their while – with long-term investments, steady to high returns, confidence in growing consumption, and security in contractual adherence. Let us put our heads together and create investment products that work for Australian super-funds and Indian infrastructure and that work for Australian

pensioners and Indian consumers – and that lead to a win-win situation.

Ladies and Gentleman,

13. Along with investment, bilateral trade numbers have grown but remain below potential. India-Australia trade was valued at about US\$ 21 billion in 2017. Our trade basket must grow. I am confident that we will make progress on the Australia-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement. In the recent Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership meeting held in Singapore, India and Australia, along with the other negotiating partners, made significant progress. India is positively and constructively engaging in the negotiations and will contribute to the conclusion of RCEP by 2019. India looks forward to a balanced outcome that results in a modern, comprehensive and mutually beneficial economic Partnership.

14. In many senses, society is already ahead of governments. The Indian community in Australia is adding value to the economy. The Indian diaspora has a reputation for contributing to local business ecosystems as well as opening job and innovation avenues for its host country. Silicon Valley is a case in point. I have been told that here in Australia, India-born migrants are the second-highest tax-paying diaspora after United Kingdom born migrants. That must please the Prime Minister. And in India too, Australians are a growing part of the workforce in fields as far apart as software and entertainment. The Indian Premier League, perhaps the hottest cricket start-up of all time, recruits many high-performing and highly-paid cricket professionals from Australia – players, coaches and support staff. In their own way, the Indians in Australia and the Australians in India are showing us the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

15. They say cricket is a metaphor for life. I believe it is also a metaphor for business. Australian businesspersons and investors looking to India should borrow from the methods of cricketers. The most successful Australian batsmen in India have been those who have shown patience, read the conditions carefully, settled down for a long innings, nurtured dependable partnerships – and not fallen for spin. Come to India. The pitch is ready!

Thank you Mr Prime Minister and thank you everybody. Have a nice evening.