

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE
ON THE TOPIC “AUSTRALIA AND INDIA AS KNOWLEDGE
PARTNERS”**

Melbourne, November 23, 2018

1. I am delighted to be here at the University of Melbourne, a hallowed seat of learning. This institution has been at the forefront of scholarship, creativity and academic excellence ever since its birth in 1853. The works of Nobel Laureates Professor Peter Doherty and Professor Elizabeth Blackburn have illuminated its global stature and reputation. The University has indeed lived up to its founding motto - POSTERA CRESCAM LAUDE, which means “May I grow in the esteem of future generations”.
2. We live in a knowledge-driven world. Our two countries share a special bond when it comes to education and learning. I am, therefore, happy to be sharing my thoughts with you on the Australia-India knowledge partnership, a key aspect of our bilateral ties. Before I do so, I wish to acknowledge the seminal contribution of scholars such as A. L. Basham, Robin Jefferey and Richard Cashman to Indian studies in Australia and the world at large.

Ladies and gentlemen,

3. Cross-flows of knowledge and ideas have been at the centre of human civilization since times immemorial. Right through the ages, India has had flourishing engagement with peoples, communities, empires and nations through education. Great institutions of learning in our country such as the Nalanda University, considered the oldest in the world, attracted students from across the world. At its peak in the 7th century A.D, it had 10,000 students from far and wide studying philosophy, religion, law and science on its campus.

4. That was a different era. Today's knowledge connection and cooperation and its context are vastly different. We have to collaborate to propel our globalized world; we have to engage with each other to empower trans-global communication and commerce; and we have to research and innovate as partners to find answers to global challenges.

My dear students,

5. As friends and as partners, India and Australia are very fortunate. We have so much in common. Our vibrant, multicultural democracy, free press, independent judicial system and the English language bring us close together. And more so, when all this is so passionately wrapped in our shared love for cricket and hockey! And Master Chef.
6. Our strong foundation of togetherness has laid the base for our ever growing knowledge partnership. This has happened principally through two streams: education cooperation and scientific collaboration. On both these counts, we have done well. But we can definitely expand the ambit and bring more knowledge areas to work on. I will come back to them a little later.
7. Australia ranks the second most preferred destination for Higher Education for Indian students. Today, there are close to 85,000 Indian students in various parts of this country. Under the New Colombo Plan of your government, more than 1500 Australian undergraduates have studied and completed internships in India in the last few years. Added to this, Australian Academies and Universities have ongoing collaborations and programmes in India. Our centers of learning are also exchanging ideas for curriculum development, pedagogy and training.
8. Education, as you know, is a force multiplier. Our governments have rightly identified it as priority area for bilateral cooperation. I am happy to note that "education" has been chosen as the flagship sector for Australia in the "India Economic Strategy" commissioned by your government.

In our education engagement, student exchange plays an important role. This is a mutually beneficial proposition. While Indian students receive world class education on your campuses, they are able to provide skill options for the local economy and, indeed, for the global human resource pool. We are also learning from your globally renowned skill development programmes. They are complementing our Skill India Mission, where we are aiming to train 150 million people over the next few years.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. Now coming to our scientific collaboration and research. This forms the core of our knowledge engagement. The Australia-India Strategic Research Fund has stood us in good stead. On my visit, the two countries have renewed their commitment to the Fund, adding a matching contribution of 10 million Australian dollars each. Australia today is among the top five research partner countries for India and the Fund is Australia's biggest investment in research collaboration with any single country. It has brought together over 90 top universities and research institutions on both sides. Joint research projects in the fields of e-waste, trauma management, energy, biomedical devices, nanotechnology, agriculture and water-systems have spawned new products and technologies for the betterment of our lives.
10. A successful project involving your esteemed University and the Indian Institute of Petroleum has led to the development of a technology whereby "flare gas" is being converted into methanol. This is helping us conserve energy and provide cleaner cooking options to our people through methanol blending with LPG. Another project involving University of Adelaide and ICRISAT in India has developed a stress tolerant chickpea variety. This has led to increasing our farm incomes, while guarding the farmers against climate variability and pests.

Ladies and gentlemen,

11. The possibilities for India and Australia to collaborate are immense. As mega-bio-diverse countries, both India and Australia can enrich the world with bio-genomic wealth and improve agriculture and human health. Our scientists and experts can together develop climate change adaptation strategies and innovative ways to manage the environment. The Fourth Industrial Revolution promises to herald a more sustainable way of life. New-age machines powered by artificial intelligence and fast-computing algorithms can provide many answers for a clean, healthy and sustainable world.
12. Another area of common interest to us is the deep vast world of blue economy. As an oceanic culture, Australia is known for its understanding and expertise in marine ecology and blue economy. This is also an area where Australia and India are collaborating under the Indian Ocean Rim Association framework. And we must do so, not just for economic gains but also to add value to the “Indo-Pacific” construct.

Ladies and gentlemen,

13. As knowledge societies, both our countries are home to science and technology institutions of high global standards. India has the third largest scientific and technical manpower in the world with 162 universities awarding over 4000 doctorate degrees annually. In 2017, patent applications by Indian Start-ups increased 15 times to 909 from 61 in 2016. India’s research and development services market is expected to reach US\$ 38 billion by 2020. India’s strength in space technology, cyber security, traditional medicine and basic research can provide new synergy to scientists and researchers in Australia.
14. The knowledge ecosystem that we both possess calls for expanding our ongoing partnership. We should create more space for the exciting world of Start-ups and innovation. Similarly, we must also bring in business stakeholders across the value chain in the shared Industry-Academia ecosystem that supports us.

15. We must also see how we can synergize our scientific engagement with education cooperation. A common understanding is that Indian students travel abroad largely for under-graduation and post-graduation studies. This trend is changing. Indian scholars are enrolling in large numbers in global centers of excellence for post-doctoral studies and for research and innovation. This presents a new opportunity for the Australia-India knowledge partnership.
16. Australian knowledge and technology industry and India's transformative growth can add to each other's progress and prosperity. We want you to partner us in our Smart Cities programme, in our digital connectivity platforms and in our cutting-edge defence manufacturing. As founding members of the International Solar Alliance, both Australia and India must also engage with each other to develop solar energy technologies and promote clean and green development.
17. Another promising area for our partnership is the field of sports. Australia is a sports powerhouse and India is aspiring to be one. In Cricket, we have learnt many tricks from each other, be it the "doosra" or the skill to negotiate the white "Kookaburra" ball. But we want to go beyond the cricket playing field. Your sporting expertise can help us develop sports medicine, sports management and a sporting way of life. On our side, we are ever ready to share with you how to bring the balance of Yoga to the pace of Australian Rules Football!

My dear students,

18. Our Knowledge Partnership has been most democratic in terms of its impact and participation. It has brought benefits to students, farmers, patients, consumers, women and, indeed, to each and every segment of our society. Let us join hands, as scholars, as researchers and as policy makers to bring the fruits of Australia-India Knowledge collaboration for greater public good.

19. But as we do so, let us remember - knowledge without compassion and character is of limited value. The life of Mahatma Gandhi and other great men and women have taught us so. This year we are celebrating Mahatma Gandhi's 150th birth anniversary. I had the honour to unveil his statue in Sydney along with Prime Minister Scott Morrison yesterday. I hope his legacy will continue to inspire us as we work to make this world a better place for ourselves.
20. I once again thank the University of Melbourne for this opportunity to share my thoughts with you. I wish you success and fulfilment in the years ahead.

Thank you!