

SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND AT THE BANQUET HOSTED IN HONOUR OF HIS EXCELLENCY PRESIDENT OF SEYCHELLES, MR DANNY ANTOINE ROLLEN FAURE

Rashtrapati Bhavan, June 25, 2018

1. It gives me great pleasure to welcome you, Your Excellency, and your delegation.
2. India is not unfamiliar to you. You have visited our country several times in the past. We were pleased to welcome you in India in March this year for the International Solar Alliance Founding Conference. But today is a special day as this is your first State Visit to our country.

Excellency,

3. The close bonds of friendship between India and Seychelles have stood the test of time. For the past four decades, since the independence of Seychelles, our countries have been working together as partners in tackling common challenges, addressing critical issues, and strengthening regional and global cooperation frameworks.
4. We laud your vision for Seychelles, particularly your emphasis on transparency, good governance and accountability in public life. Your focus on economic growth, poverty alleviation and social welfare is indeed commendable. It is heartening to note that Seychelles, has emerged as the top African country in the Human Development Index. I would like to compliment your Government for this extraordinary achievement.
5. Though Seychelles is small in terms of size, it has gained global recognition for its pioneering role in Blue Economy, Sustainable Development, Environment and Clean Energy. Indeed, Seychelles

occupies an important place among the Small Island Developing States and the African Union.

Excellency,

6. We have a robust defence, security and strategic cooperation with Seychelles. Our strategic convergence has reinforced the resolve to secure our oceanic space, in the region and beyond. India views the Indian Ocean and the Pacific as a contiguous construct sharing similar economic opportunities and security challenges. Our vision is for a free, open, peaceful, prosperous and inclusive Indo-Pacific region, based on a rules-based order and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.

7. Bilaterally, our defence and security cooperation has deepened during the last four decades. Indian Navy contingents have been regularly participating in your National Day parades. This is not only a matter of great honour for us but also a manifestation of our strong bilateral relations. As I speak here, Indian Naval Ship, INS Tarkash, has entered Port Victoria to participate in your National Day celebrations on 29th June. The second Dornier Maritime Surveillance Aircraft, which is our gift for your National Day, would also be joining the Seychelles Air Force on this special day.

Excellency,

8. You have just visited Gujarat. A substantial part of our Diaspora in Seychelles comes from this State. Our traditional linkages, cultural affinities and people-to-people exchanges are the cornerstone of our bilateral relationship. Indians were among the first settlers in your country and form the bedrock of the Seselwa society.

9. Excellency, nature has been very kind with you. When we talk of Seychelles in India, we are told of colourful sands, the largest nut in the world and the special Aldabra tortoise. We thank you for gifting us what today, uniquely belongs only to you. Thank you, indeed, for the friendly tortoises.

Excellency,

10. I would like to assure you of our continued commitment to extend development assistance in diverse areas that are of priority to the friendly people of Seychelles. I am confident that the Agreements we have signed today would open new vistas of bilateral cooperation and would further deepen and diversify our strategic partnership.

11. With these words, Mr. President, I once again welcome you and the distinguished members of your delegation and wish you a productive and enjoyable stay in India.

Ladies and Gentlemen, may I now request you to join me in raising a toast to:

- the health and wellbeing of His Excellency President Danny Faure;
- the continued progress and prosperity of the Republic of Seychelles and its friendly people; and
- the everlasting friendship between India and Seychelles.

Thank you.
