

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

Rashtrapati Bhavan, November 29, 2019

1. It is with great pleasure that I welcome you, Your Excellency, on your first State Visit to India. We are honoured that you have chosen India as your first destination abroad after assuming office. Your visit reflects the depth of our bilateral ties and our shared commitment to strengthen them further.
2. Our countries enjoy civilisational ties. They make our contemporary partnership and embrace, warm and meaningful. The mandate you have received and the large turnout at the recently concluded elections shows the strength of democracy that prevails in Sri Lanka. At a time when the winds of change are rearranging the established international architecture, it is, indeed, a matter of immense satisfaction for us that a strong Sri Lanka-India bilateral relationship continues to remain an article of faith for both sides.

Excellency,

3. India attaches the highest importance to its relationship with Sri Lanka. We wish to see a stable, prosperous and peaceful Sri Lanka, wherein the aspirations of all her people are fulfilled. Inclusivity and respect for diversity are the strength of our shared democratic values. Our government's vision of inclusive development, *that is 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas and Sabka Vishwas'* also extends to our neighbourhood.
4. As close neighbours, we share deep-rooted historical bonds of friendship, goodwill and mutual understanding. The destinies of our two countries are intertwined; security and development of our two nations are indivisible. The warm waters of the Indian Ocean and the moist Monsoon winds have nourished

our people and our social fabric for centuries. They have brought us happiness and hope, progress and prosperity. They have defined our ethos and our endeavours. And on the cricket field, they have determined our swing and seam!

5. Our shared heritage is deep and abiding. We need to find innovative ways to further cement our multi-faceted ties for the mutual benefit of our peoples. We deeply appreciate your government's resolve to work closely with us to ensure stability and security in our region.

Excellency,

6. As you embark on your journey to fulfill the mandate of your people, India extends its fullest support to you and your efforts, as a true and steady friend. We are confident that you will succeed in achieving your vision of peace, progress and prosperity for your country.
7. Excellency, Sri Lanka has enriched the world and the English language with a beautiful word – Serendipity. It derives from Serendivip, an ancient name of your emerald island. Serendipity may mean “a chance pleasant occurrence”, but for us your friendship has always been certain and always more fulfilling.
8. May India-Sri Lanka relations attain greater heights under your leadership. And may the blessings of the Noble Triple Gem be upon you!!

Thank you very much!
Bohoma Sthutiya!