

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB MUKHERJEE  
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED IN HONOUR OF THE PRESIDENT OF  
ISRAEL, HE MR. REUVEN RIVLIN**

**New Delhi : November 15, 2016**

Your Excellency, Mr. Reuven Rivlin, President of the State of Israel,  
Mrs. Nechama Rivlin,  
Distinguished members of the Israeli delegation,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

1. It gives me great pleasure to extend a very warm welcome to Your Excellency and Mrs. Nechama Rivlin on your first State Visit to India.
2. Your visit is, indeed, significant – as it is taking place twenty years after the last visit of an Israeli President to India.
3. I fondly recall my own State Visit to Israel in October 2015. I greatly value my discussions with Your Excellency and my interactions with Prime Minister Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders. Everywhere and at every occasion, I was deeply touched by the warmth of the people of Israel towards my country and my people. I take this opportunity to once again thank you for your gracious hospitality. It is a great pleasure to receive you today in New Delhi.
4. Mr. President, you represent a people who Indians admire - with whom we feel a strong and unique bond. We are both ancient civilizations that have made significant contributions to humanity. Trade and cultural contacts between our peoples can be traced back to the Indus Valley Civilisation. These linkages are, in fact, well documented - including in *“Periplus of the Erythrian Sea”*. Indian society has, over the centuries, been enriched by the achievements of its Jewish community.
5. Both our peoples gained independence after the Second World War. Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation, had believed that the Jews people had a legitimate claim for Israel. Pandit Nehru, too, believed in this. He had said, in 1950 and I quote, “Israel is a fact”.
6. As free nations, we have both spent our formative years in developmental planning and nation-building. We both have remained firmly committed to democratic values and continue to strive for our common goals of global security and peace.

Excellency,

7. India admires the people of Israel for all that you have accomplished. Your leadership, past and present, has inspired your people to overcome unspeakable tribulations and emerge stronger. Through sheer hard work and determination, you have built a highly progressive, confident and self-reliant nation. Your passion for innovation and your entrepreneurial spirit has earned you the title of a “Start Up Nation”.

Excellency,

8. The recent bilateral exchanges between India and Israel reflect the high level of trust between us and our mutual understanding. They underline our shared desire to intensify our multi-faceted bilateral co-operation. India’s economy is presently on a positive trajectory. While opening it further and implementing the “*Make in India*” and other flagship campaigns, we welcome the participation of Israel, a valued partner, in India’s new growth narrative.

9. Our Governments have jointly identified areas that we would like to prioritise – where we have tremendous synergies: India needs to develop its capabilities in water resources management, agriculture, defence, renewable energy, academic exchanges, science and technology as well as homeland and cyber security. Israel has advanced technologies and proven capabilities in these key sectors. I am happy that you will be visiting one of the 15 Centres of Excellence in Agriculture set up with Israeli assistance. I am also glad that you are accompanied on your visit by heads of Israel’s leading Universities and institutions of higher education who seek to forge ties with premier counterparts in India.

Mr. President,

10. Many of the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century call for a co-ordinated response from the global community. To effectively respond to global challenges including climate change, we will need to collectively work for efficient solutions. We must leave our children a world that is better, cleaner and healthier, a world that is at peace, where diverse peoples live and flourish side by side in peace, respectful of each other’s beliefs and in total harmony with each other. I am confident that together, India and Israel can realise this important goal. As we celebrate 25 years of our diplomatic relations next year, India looks forward to further intensifying our partnership for our mutual benefit and the good of the world.

11. With these words, I welcome you and Mrs. Rivlin once again and wish you a very comfortable and enjoyable stay in India.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I invite you to join me in raising a toast:-

to the health and well-being of President Rivlin and Mrs. Rivlin;

to the enduring friendship between the Republic of India and the State of Israel;

- to peace in the world; and
- the continued progress and prosperity of the people of Israel.