

Presidential Communications Operations Office
Presidential News Desk

**JOINT PRESS STATEMENT OF
PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE**

[Delivered at the Reception Hall, Malacañan Palace, Manila | 18 October 2019]

I am honored to extend the warmest welcome [of] the Filipino people [to] His Excellency Ram Nath Kovind, President of the Republic of India.

President Kovind's State Visit celebrates seventy years of warm and friendly ties between the Philippines and India that continue to grow – strongly anchored on centuries-old connections and challenges between our peoples.

These past seven decades are more than just the passage of time. They signify the stability of true friendship availing itself and between two major Asian democracies. They represent the steady maturing of ties that has helped transform our nations into the fast-growing economies of what they are today.

More importantly, our celebrations in this year point us to the future – to the infinite possibilities of evolving relations.

During our bilateral meeting this afternoon, President Kovind and I committed to further build a more dynamic and forward-looking relationship between the Philippines and India. A friendship that allows us to seize the tremendous opportunities of today that are ours for the taking. And a partnership that enables us to face challenges to our hard-won progress – jointly and effectively.

I welcomed India's role in the defense capability upgrade program against the backdrop of our growing security cooperation.

As countries strategically located in the Pacific and Indian Oceans, we affirmed our shared interest to protect our maritime commons and advance the rule of law in our maritime domains. We agreed also to continue working together to fight terrorism and violent extremism and other transboundary threats.

I also took the opportunity to thank India for helping us rebuild Marawi without precondition, delay or hesitation.

We welcomed the steady rise of our trade and investment exchanges, while recognizing the need to further strengthen our economic ties.

The Philippines and India are at the front --- forefront of the global IT and BPO industries. This is a shared distinction that encourages us to cooperate more so that we can complement each other's strengths.

As it has been for centuries, the linkages between our peoples remain [the] strong knot that ties our countries together. Whether in the realm of business or [socio-cultural sphere], the Indian community in the Philippines has been instrumental in fostering mutual respect and understanding between our peoples.

We recognized the Mahaveer Philippines Foundation for its humanitarian initiatives that have transformed the lives of many people, including our heroes in Marawi.

We agreed that these people-to-people ties must not only be sustained but also strengthened by way of increased two-way tourism, business, and academic exchanges.

President Kovind and I likewise discussed the most pressing concerns of our region and beyond such as maritime security and economic integration.

Indeed, our discussion today was fruitful in its comprehensiveness, strengthening the foundations of our long-standing relations. With the signing of bilateral agreements, we have likewise widened the path towards enhancement of our engagement in maritime security, science [and] technology, tourism, and cultural cooperation.

We hope to look back on this day as a milestone in our relations – the day when we set out to turn promise into reality, and potential into concrete benefits [that] bring the greatest positive impact on the lives of our peoples.

Ladies and gentlemen, the era of [zero-sum] games and the “us vs them” approach to world affairs is over. What we need now is open and inclusive cooperation based on mutual respect and sovereign equality.

Hence, just as India is deepening its presence in our region through the “Act East Policy,” the Philippines is also expanding the boundaries of its diplomacy in pursuit of a truly independent foreign policy, as mandated by our Constitution.

We are diversifying partnerships – rebalancing old ones and strengthening those that have traditionally been on the margins of our diplomacy.

What it requires, is of course, a deft and agile diplomacy that empowers us to maximize opportunities for cooperation in a complex external environment.

In this period of interdependence and geopolitical shifts, an open, balanced, and pragmatic stance is the most reasonable and least costly path to peace and prosperity for all.

India is a natural partner of the Philippines. Enhancing our relations is therefore timely as it is necessary.

Thank you. [applause]

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