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President's Secretariat

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The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, addressed members of the Parliament of Swaziland today (April 10, 2018). He became the first visiting Head of State to address the Parliament of the country.

Speaking on the occasion, the President said that we are living in a digital and hyper-connected world that places immense challenges before parliamentarians. Local and day-to-day issues, related to jobs and the economy, are influenced by developments elsewhere, be it global food prices, climate change or security threats of various nature. The impact of globalisation and technology, and soaring aspirations of people, have added new dimensions to public policy. To legislate in such times demands even greater awareness and acumen. But with challenges come opportunities. Today, we see greater participation of people in debates and discussions. Legislators can get instant feedback on major issues.

The President said that over seven decades India has developed a robust institutional architecture of parliamentary democracy. We would be happy to share this experience with this august House in Swaziland. The President offered concessional finance on the part of India for construction of a new parliament building in Swaziland.

The President said that Indian growth is fuelled by frugal and cost-effective innovation. Our technologies and institutional models can help reduce costs of production in Swaziland. We are keen to share our expertise and experience with Swaziland and indeed with all of the African continent. On this count, our approach has been to create local capacities, to move hand in hand, in solidarity and in partnership with our African brothers and sisters.

The President said that despite advances in new technologies, agriculture still remains the mainstay for a majority of both our populations. He was happy to note that India has already shared some of its experiences with Swazi farmers. This has helped them to achieve a multi-fold increase in maize productivity. He announced that India would facilitate establishing a Centre of Agricultural Excellence in Swaziland. He also said that India would develop an irrigation system in the Lubuyane region.

The President observed that climate change is one of the most critical challenges for our world. He noted that Swaziland has itself struggled with the El Nino phenomenon, leading to drought for two years. To support the Swaziland National Disaster Management Agency, India has offered US\$ 1 million as well as foodgrains.

In another event, the President inaugurated the Royal Science and Technology Park this morning. The Park has been developed and built with the assistance of India. He also received a presentation on the Technology Park as a location for IT education and capacity building as well as for IT-enabled services.

The President had landed in Swaziland yesterday (April 9, 2018) at the King Mswati III International Airport, where he was received by the Prime Minister of Swaziland and other dignitaries. He proceeded directly to talks with the King of Swaziland on bilateral and global issues. The King also conferred the Order of the Lion on the President. This is the highest civilian honour Swaziland bestows on a non-citizen.

Speaking after the ceremony, the President renewed India's commitment to Swaziland and announced that an Indian embassy would be opening in the kingdom shortly. In the presence of the President and the King, India and Swaziland signed two agreements — on health cooperation; and on visa waivers for those travelling on official and diplomatic passports. Later in the evening of April 9, the King hosted a banquet for the President.

Following the conclusion of his visit to Swaziland, the President today (April 10, 2018) will leave for Zambia. This will be the final leg of his journey to three African nations – Equatorial Guinea, Swaziland and Zambia. In the evening, he will meet and address the Indian community in Lusaka.

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