

PRESIDENT KOVIND ADDRESSES GATHERING IN YANGON; COMMITS INDIA TO PROJECTS THAT PROMOTE MYANMAR'S PRIORITIES, A STABLE NEIGHBOURHOOD AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES; PRESIDENT ALSO FELICITATES INA VETERANS LIVING IN MYANMAR

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President's Secretariat

President Kovind Addresses Gathering in Yangon; Commits India to Projects that Promote Myanmar's Priorities, a Stable Neighbourhood and the Development of Local Communities; President also Felicitates INA Veterans Living in Myanmar

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The President of India, Shri Ram Nath Kovind, reached Yangon this afternoon (December 12, 2018), on the second day of his state visit to Myanmar. Later in the day, he addressed a gathering comprising largely people of Indian origin and Indian expatriates at a reception hosted by Shri Vikram Misri, Ambassador of India to Myanmar.

Speaking on the occasion, the President said India's "Act East" and "Neighbourhood First" policies prioritise India's immediate region, and Myanmar is a focus country for both. These policies have helped India adjust to a world in which it is among the leading economies, and are also enabling its neighbours to engage in partnerships for growth and development. Opportunities have expanded beyond trade and investment to energy and electrical grids, communications and transport, and people-to-people ties.

The President said development cooperation has become an important component of India's external relations, especially in the neighbourhood. India shares its expertise by building infrastructure, creating capacity, and setting up institutions. It does so, the President said, with the conviction that a peaceful, prosperous and stable neighbourhood is in everyone's interest. While implementing such projects, India's approach is in line with the priorities of its partners – ensuring respect for rule of law and good governance; insisting on transparency; committing to transfer skills and technologies to local communities; ensuring projects are environmentally and socially-responsible; and, most important, ensuring such projects do not create unsustainable burdens. The President said that these precepts are essential parameters of responsible project development and he was glad that India-Myanmar bilateral cooperation is designed in accordance with them.

The President noted that Myanmar is undergoing multiple and simultaneous transitions towards democracy, peace and economic development. As a sister democracy and a civilisational friend, India is fully conscious of the challenges Myanmar faces. Over the last 70 years, India has put in place systems and structures of governance that have enabled diversity to serve the cause of

national progress. It is in this spirit of good neighbourly cooperation that India is ready to offer Myanmar any assistance towards addressing issues of national reconciliation, reconstruction and economic development.

Earlier the President commenced his engagements in Yangon by paying respects at the Martyrs' Mausoleum. He also visited the revered Shwedagon Pagoda. Following this, he met and felicitated nine surviving veterans of the Indian National Army who live in Yangon. The oldest of them, Shri K.A. Perumal, is aged about 90.

This morning, the President flew to Yangon from Nay Pyi Taw, the capital of Myanmar. Wrapping up his engagements in the capital, the President visited the Advanced Centre for Agricultural Research and Education (ACARE) at the Yezin Agricultural University. There, he inaugurated and reviewed Indian technological projects that are aimed at supporting farmers in Myanmar and are being carried out by the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, with the support of the Ministry of External Affairs. The President formally launched a mobile app that provides technical assistance to farmers as well as distributed soil health cards, based on the chemical analysis of a specific field. This is the first time that soil health cards are being used in Myanmar.

Following this, the President visited the adjoining Rice Bio-Park. There, the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, funded by the Ministry of External Affairs, is undertaking a project to ensure optimal use and value addition of the gamut of bio-sources in a rice farm, including rice straw and rice husk. Burning of rice straw and rice husk can cause pollution. The project uses technology to deploy the rice straw and rice husk in alternative and productive ways – to produce feed for cattle, promote mushroom culture, and make paper and compost.

Tomorrow (December 13, 2018), on the concluding day of his state visit, the President will inaugurate the Fifth Enterprise India Exhibition in Yangon. He will also visit the historic Kali Temple in the city, which is a symbol for the entire Indian community in Myanmar, as well as pay his respects at the mausoleum of Bahadur Shah Zafar, an iconic figure during the uprising of 1857.

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