



**State visit of
H.E. Ram Nath Kovind
President of India
and Mrs. Savita Kovind,
10–11 September 2019
Statement at Bessastadir,
10 September 2019**

Dear President Kovind

I welcome you, Mrs. Savita Kovind and your daughter to Iceland. I hope you will enjoy your stay here, and return home with happy memories. And I am pleased that your visit has already strengthened the strong relationship between our two countries. A few minutes ago, three Agreements of Cooperation between Iceland and India were signed here at Bessastaðir.

First, an agreement on Exemption from Visa Requirement for Holders of Diplomatic and Official Passports, important for our diplomats and officials as they strive to deepen our relations.

Secondly, we have a Cultural Exchange Programme for the Years 2019-2022. Here in Iceland we admire of course India's history which goes back to the earliest records of human actions. As we aim for increased trade between our countries, and increased tourism, we foresee an increase as well in cultural encounters.

Third, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Department of Fisheries Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Government of the Republic of India and the Ministry of Industries and Innovation of Iceland, Department of Fisheries and Aquaculture on Cooperation in the Field of Sustainable Fisheries Development.

The oceans may separate us, but they unite us as well. We like to believe here in Iceland that we have much to offer when it comes to sustainable fisheries, we look forward to developing our cooperation in this field yet further.

As we speak, the First Ladies of Iceland and India are visiting Lambhagi, the geothermal greenhouse where we showcase how we Icelanders can produce vegetables in an environmentally friendly and sustainable manner.

And after this meeting, the President will deliver a public lecture at the University of Iceland, named “India-Iceland for a Green Planet”. The emphasis there is obvious. In the spirit of optimism and determination, we can seek solutions for a sustainable future.

Tomorrow, a business forum awaits, organized by the Iceland-India trade council, other Icelandic institutes and two Indian partners, the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry of India, and the Confederation of Indian Industry. I am sure that after that meeting of minds, we will be able to explore many potential projects, in fisheries and agriculture, in biotechnology, in healthcare, in innovation, to name but a few.

Yes, our countries vary vastly in size and there is a fair distance between us, but we share hopes for a bright future for our citizens, a future of wellbeing and security, individual freedom, gender equality, freedom and integrity.

During the meeting of our delegations, we also discussed multilateral cooperation, India’s interest in the Arctic region, UN reform and related matters.

Here in Iceland, we hear about increasing tension in Kashmir, threats and violence, the risk of an all-out conflict. We must voice our hope that peace will prevail, that civilians will not suffer in the region.

Finally, allow me to mention that I know of a number of Icelanders who watched with great interest India’s ambitious moon mission. The last thing I heard was that the lander module has been located on the lunar surface; hopefully your scientists will be able to establish contact with it. And let us hope, more generally, that science and education will lead humankind in the right direction, here in Iceland, in India and the whole world.