

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB
MUKHERJEE AT THE BANQUET HOSTED IN HIS HONOUR BY
THE GOVERNOR GENERAL OF INDEPENDENT STATE OF PAPUA
NEW GUINEA, H.E. SIR MICHAEL OGIO**

Your Excellency, Sir Michael Ogio,
Governor General of Papua New Guinea,
Your Excellency, Mr. Peter O' Neill, Prime Minister of Papua New
Guinea,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege for me to make this historic journey to Papua New Guinea - the first-ever State Visit by any Indian President to this beautiful country. Since we arrived, I have been struck by the splendour of Papua New Guinea's pristine landscape.

Excellency, let me begin by thanking you for the warm hospitality accorded to me and members of my delegation. I am accompanied by Dr. Sanjeev Kumar Balyan, Union Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare and senior Members of the Indian Parliament representing different political parties and different regions of India. I am deeply touched by the graciousness of your hospitality and the friendship of your people. We bring the good wishes of the people of India and a deep commitment to energising our relationship.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, it was as early as the 8th Century AD that Indians first came to Papua. They were welcomed as friends. Over the centuries, they have continued to travel here - many families have settled here, working shoulder to shoulder with Papuans for development and growth. Today, the greater percentage of them are well educated professionals and businessmen whose contribution has been valued and appreciated. I take this opportunity to thank you and the successive generations of your people who have made them feel comfortable and secure in this beautiful land.

Excellency, both our nations are bound by our common experience of colonial rule. Since independence, we have charted individual paths and traversed many hurdles to achieve economic progress. We now seek to work together as reliable partners to achieve our common aspirations of peace and security, prosperity and sustainable development in our regions.

Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, India has come a long way - from being a food-importing nation in the 1970s, to self-reliance in the

production of grains and now a net exporter. We have achieved this by developing high yielding varieties of seeds and improved methods and techniques of agriculture, dairy and poultry farming. Whether it is complex software and high precision equipment for our space and nuclear-power industry, or technology for harnessing renewable energy from the sun and wind, we have, today, developed advanced capabilities. These are cost effective, yet second to none in their efficacy – as our Missions to the Moon and Mars have proven. India would be happy to share experience and knowledge and expertise with the people of Papua New Guinea.

Excellency, you are blessed with fertile soil, lands rich in natural resources and abundant marine wealth. Our public and private sector are keen to join you in exploring your gas and oil reserves, establishing downstream industries and developing the infrastructure that you require in the different sectors of your growing economy. We have much to offer. At this time - when both our nations have prioritised the sustainable use of ocean and marine resources, there are infinite opportunities that must be seized. The shifting of the centre of gravity of the global economy to this region is another compelling reason for our intensified co-operation in sectors of common interest. Let the universal values of '*Sulah-Kul*' and '*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*' bind us closer as we determine to build on our complementarities.

Excellency, during his visit to this region in 2014, Prime Minister of India, Shri Narendra Modi, had articulated the vision of my Government to build an enduring partnership between our nations and our peoples. We consider our co-operation with the Islands of the Pacific to be a key component of our Act East Policy. A number of initiatives announced at the first FIPIC Summit have borne fruit and India remains committed to this process.

Excellency, I would once again like to thank you and say what a pleasure it is for me, personally, to be here. I take this opportunity to most cordially invite you to visit India and also to the Prime Minister for another visit to India.

Thank you!

Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you to join me in raising a toast:

- To the health and well-being of Governor General Sir Michael Ogio;
- To prosperity of the people of Papua New Guinea; and
- To the enduring friendship between India and Papua New Guinea.