

**MESSAGE OF
THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
ON THE EVE OF THE BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF BHAGWAN BIRSA
MUNDA**

New Delhi – November 14, 2024

My dear fellow citizens,
Namaskar!
Johar!

I convey my greetings to the people of India on the occasion of 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas'. We are commencing the year-long celebration of the 150th birth anniversary of 'Dharti Aaba' Bhagwan Birsa Munda. On behalf of all the fellow citizens, I pay my respectful homage to the sacred memory of Bhagwan Birsa Munda.

I observe a new consciousness being spread across the country for tribal pride and the ideals of the Constitution. This consciousness is being transformed into action. This spirit will become the foundation of the bright future of the entire country, including the tribal society.

Two years ago, I had the privilege of visiting Bhagwan Birsa Munda's village Ulihatu in Jharkhand and offering floral tribute to his statue.

Last year, on the occasion of 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas', Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji also visited Ulihatu and sought the blessings of Bhagwan Birsa Munda. That was the first visit of any Prime Minister to Ulihatu. This made the people of the tribal society very happy. On the same day, 'PM Janjati Adivasi Nyay Maha-Abhiyan' i.e. PM-JANMAN was launched from Jharkhand.

Dear fellow citizens,

Since the 18th century, the tribal society had waged organised revolt against the injustices of the British rule. Along with the brave brothers Sidhu-Kanhu and Chand-Bhairav who led the Santhal-Hool in the year 1855, the brave sisters Phulo-Jhano also showed extraordinary courage. When I was the Governor of Jharkhand, I had the privilege of visiting the village, Uri-Mari and unveiling the statue of the great heroes, Sidhu-Kanhu.

Since the year 2021, the Government of India has started the tradition of celebrating 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' every year on 15th November on the occasion of the birth anniversary of Bhawan Birsa Munda. No praise is too high for this decision to express respect for the tribal communities. Many steps are being taken to make the people aware of the glorious contribution of the tribal communities. Museums are being built in various parts of the country in memory of tribal heroes. The museum of Bhagwan Birsa Munda in Ranchi has become a site of pilgrimage. A museum named 'Janjatiya Darpan' has also been developed in Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Dear fellow citizens,

I grew up listening to the stories of many tribal heroes, from Tilka Manjhi and Bhagwan Birsa Munda to Laxman Nayak. But, people in general did not know much about those great heroes. Due to the efforts of the government, people have now become well acquainted with the stories of tribal freedom fighters.

For ages, people of tribal society have been enriching the civilization and culture of our country. The eternal life values of our society are visible in the story of Ramayana. During his long exile, Prabhu Shri Ram lived with the people of the tribal society like one of them. Prabhu Shri Ram adopted the forest dwellers and the forest dwellers adopted Prabhu Shri Ram. This

spirit of affinity and harmony, found in the tribal society, is the basis of our culture and civilization.

Dear fellow citizens,

I am happy to share that I also contributed to the efforts to include the tribal language 'Santhali' in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. This was made possible during the tenure of respected Atal Bihari Vajpayee Ji.

Even after several decades of independence, most of the people of the tribal communities led their lives with a lot of difficulties due to lack of their own houses and basic facilities like electricity, water and roads. In case of illness, the burden of medical expenses made their life even more difficult. The path to development was also not easy for them. The people belonging to the tribal communities make very beautiful products as they have centuries-old art heritage. There were some laws which banned certain enterprises of the tribal people. Also, lack of information and facilities about marketing their products was an obstacle. Thus, due to the lack of basic needs like housing, transport, medical care, education and employment, those people remained away from the mainstream of development.

But, now these facilities are being provided to them. Their standard of living has improved. Along with this, opportunities for economic development are also increasing for them.

The present government is taking forward the journey of tribal development and welfare at a fast pace. Many campaigns and programs are being implemented on a large scale.

Special measures have been taken to provide all facilities to the tribal people in all national programmes of development and welfare. Apart from this, special schemes are being implemented for the benefit of the tribal communities.

The people of about 750 tribal groups of the country hold a special place for us. Among these, the number of PVTG groups is 75. They live in different regions of the country. In June last year, I had invited the people belonging to the PVTG communities to the Rashtrapati Bhavan. I spent a lot of time with them and discussed the solutions to their problems. I have been meeting tribal groups from all regions and states in the Rashtrapati Bhavan. During my visits to different states and Union Territories, I participate in programs focused on the tribal communities there, and I interact with them. I give special priority to meeting our tribal sisters. I am happy to see that a large number of our tribal sisters are achieving economic self-reliance through self-help groups and other means of growth. More and more opportunities for development are opening up for them.

It is being ensured that the benefits of major national schemes reach all tribal beneficiaries in a timely manner.

The PM-JANMAN Abhiyan launched by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi Ji on the day of 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas' last year aims to bring about comprehensive development of the people of the PVTG communities. Under this campaign, a target has been set to provide many facilities to the people of the PVTG community before the time limit of three years, with an expenditure of more than Rupees 24 thousand crore.

This year, on 2nd October, the birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation Mahatma Gandhi, the Central Government has launched the 'Dharti Aba Janjati Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan' from the land of Bhagwan Birsa Munda. The objective of this campaign with an allocation of Rupees 80 thousand crore is to ensure that every tribal person should get the benefit of government schemes. Every tribal village should be connected through roads and mobile connectivity. All tribal families should have their own house. About 63 thousand tribal villages will benefit from this campaign of

development and welfare. More than five crore tribal people will benefit from this nationwide campaign.

Dear fellow citizens,

More than 700 Eklavya Model Residential Schools are being built in the country to provide good education to tribal children. I have laid the foundation stones of many Eklavya schools and inaugurated many other schools. It is a matter of happiness that more than 30 lakh tribal students are getting scholarships. Scholarships are also being given for studying abroad. Youth of tribal society are joining the Civil Services, Medical and Engineering and other fields.

The target of eliminating Sickle Cell Anemia from the tribal society is included under the goal of building a developed India by the year 2047.

It is noteworthy that the allocation of funds for the Development Action Plan for Scheduled Tribes has increased manifold during the last decade. The budget of the Ministry of Tribal Affairs for the year 2024-25 is Rupees 13 thousand crore. This is 74 percent more than last year's budget.

Our country will become truly developed only when our tribal people also become developed. Fast paced progress of the people of the tribal communities is our national priority.

We want that the centuries-old identities of the tribal communities remain intact and, at the same time, they continue to march ahead on the path of modern development.

Dear fellow citizens,

I have not only seen the pain and suffering of the tribal society, I have also felt it myself. My journey of public service began as a member of the Tribes Advisory Council. Now, I feel happy to observe improvement in the lives of tribal communities.

The talented people among the tribal communities are also getting greater recognition. About 100 people from the tribal communities have been honoured with Padma Vibhushan, Padma Bhushan and Padma Shri awards during the last 10 years.

Governors and Chief Ministers of many states, ministers in central and state governments and many people holding high positions are from the tribal communities.

The immense love that I get from all the fellow citizens, including the people of the tribal communities, makes me emotional at times. Behind this feeling of mine is also the pleasant truth that today, sky is the limit for the development of the people belonging to the tribal communities. No matter how high they aspire to fly, the society and the government are fully committed to supporting them.

With this hope and confidence, I congratulate all the fellow citizens on 'Janjatiya Gaurav Divas'.

Thank you!
Jai Hind!
Jai Bharat!