

**ADDRESS TO THE NATION
BY
THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
ON THE EVE OF THE 78TH INDEPENDENCE DAY**

New Delhi, August 14, 2024

My Dear Fellow Citizens,

I extend to you all my heartiest Independence Day greetings.

I am delighted to see the nation prepare to celebrate the 78th Independence Day. Witnessing the tri-colour unfurl on this occasion, be it at the Red Fort, at state capitals or in local neighbourhoods, always thrills our hearts. It is an expression of the joy of being part of our great nation along with more than 1.4 billion fellow Indians. Just as we celebrate various festivals with our families, we celebrate our Independence Day and Republic Day with our family that comprises our fellow citizens.

On 15th of August, in all parts of the country and also abroad, Indians participate in the flag-hoisting ceremonies, sing patriotic songs, and distribute sweets. Young children participate in cultural events. When we hear them talking about our great nation and about the privilege of being a citizen of it, we find in their words echoes of what our great freedom fighters used to say. Then we realise that we are part of a chain that binds the dreams of those who participated in the freedom struggle and the aspirations of those who will witness the nation regaining its full glory in the years to come.

Realising that we are links of this chain of history is humbling. It makes us recall the days when the nation was under a foreign rule. Patriotic and brave souls took immense risks and made supreme sacrifices. We salute their memory. Thanks to their unceasing labour, the soul of India awoke from centuries of torpor. Different traditions

and values that had continued to live on beneath the surface found new expressions in several generations of great leaders. Unifying the diversity of traditions and their expressions was Mahatma Gandhi, Father of the Nation and our lodestar.

Alongside, there were great leaders like Sardar Patel, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and Babasaheb Ambedkar as well as Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad and many others. It was a nationwide movement, in which all communities participated. Among tribals, there were Tilka Manjhi, Birsa Munda, Laxman Naik and Phulo-Jhano, among many more whose sacrifices are now being appreciated. We have started celebrating the birth anniversary of Bhagwan Birsa Munda as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas. Celebrations of his 150th birth anniversary next year will be an opportunity to further honour his contribution to the national re-awakening.

My Dear Fellow Citizens,

Today, on 14th August, the nation is observing Vibhajan Vibhishika Smr̥ti Diwas, a day to recall partition horrors. As the great nation was divided, millions had to suffer forced migration, lakhs of people lost their lives. A day before we celebrate Independence Day, we recall that unparalleled human tragedy and stand with the families that were torn asunder.

We are celebrating the 75th year of the Constitution. The journey of the newly independent nation was not without obstacles. Remaining firm on the Constitutional ideals of justice, equality, liberty and fraternity, we are on the mission to enable India to reclaim its rightful position on the global stage.

As general elections were held in our country this year, the number of eligible voters stood at nearly 97 crore. This was a historic record, making it the largest electoral exercise humankind has ever witnessed. The Election Commission of India should be congratulated for the smooth and flawless conduct of such a gigantic event. I thank all officials and security personnel who braved the heat and helped

electors. When such a large number of people exercise their franchise, it is a resounding vote for the idea of democracy. India's successful conduct of elections strengthens democratic forces around the world.

Dear Fellow Citizens,

From 2021 to 2024, India has been among the fastest growing major economies, with an average growth rate of 8 percent annually. This has not only put more money in the hands of people, it has also drastically reduced the number of people living below the poverty line. As for those who continue to suffer from poverty, all efforts are being made not only to provide a helping hand to them, but also to bring them out of it. For example, the PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana, launched in the initial phase of Covid-19, continues to provide free ration to about 80 crore people, which also ensures that those who have recently come out of poverty are not forced back into it.

It is a matter of pride for all that India has become the fifth largest economy in the world, and we are also poised to become one of the top three economies soon. This has been made possible only by tireless hard work of farmers and workers, by the farsightedness of planners and wealth-creators, and by the visionary leadership.

Farmers, our *Annadata*, have ensured that agricultural production continues to beat expectations. With this, they have contributed immensely to making India self-reliant in agriculture and feed our people. Infrastructure has received a boost in recent years. Strategic planning and effective institutions have helped expand the network of roads and highways, railways as well as ports. Considering the great potential of futuristic technology, the Government has vigorously promoted a range of sectors, such as semiconductors and Artificial Intelligence, while also creating an ideal ecosystem for startups which will propel their growth. It has made India an even more attractive investment destination. With greater transparency, the banking and financial sector has become much more efficient. All of these factors have set the stage for the next generation of economic reforms and

economic growth that will catapult India among the developed nations.

This rapid but equitable progress has given India a higher stature in global affairs. After the successful completion of its G-20 Presidency, India has consolidated its role as the voice of the Global South. India intends to use its influential position to expand the scope of world peace and prosperity.

My Dear Fellow Citizens,

We must remember the words of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the architect of our Constitution. He had rightly said, and I quote, “We must make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy.” [Unquote] The steady progress of political democracy testifies to the progress made towards the consolidation of social democracy. The spirit of inclusion pervades every aspect of our social life. We move together as a cohesive nation with our diversity and plurality. Affirmative action must be strengthened as an instrument of inclusion. I firmly believe that in a vast country like ours, tendencies that stoke discord based upon perceived social hierarchies have to be rejected.

Social justice is a top priority of the Government, and it has taken a number of unprecedented initiatives for the welfare of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and other marginalised sections of society. Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan evam Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan, that is, PM-SURAJ, for example, aims to provide direct financial assistance to the people from the marginalised communities. The Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan or PM-JANMAN has taken the form of a mass campaign for critical interventions to improve socio-economic conditions of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups, that is, PVTGs. The National Action for Mechanized Sanitation Ecosystem or the NAMASTE scheme will ensure that no sanitation workers will have to manually engage in the hazardous task of sewer and septic tank cleaning.

The term 'justice', taken in the broadest possible sense, includes a variety of social factors. I would like to stress two of them in particular, namely, gender justice and climate justice.

In our society, women are considered not only equal, but even more than equal. However, they have also suffered from traditional prejudices. But I am glad to note that the Government has given equal importance to women's welfare and women's empowerment. The budget allocation for this purpose has more than tripled in the last decade. Their participation in the labour force has increased. The most heartening development on this front has been the significant improvement in the sex ratio at birth. A variety of special government schemes have also been designed keeping the women at the centre. Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam is aimed at ensuring real empowerment of women.

Climate change has become a reality. It is all the more challenging for developing nations to change their economic paradigm. Yet, we have already made more progress in that direction than expected. India is proud to be at the forefront of humankind's battle to save the planet from the worst effects of global warming. I also urge you all to make small but effective changes in your lifestyle and contribute to the cause of dealing with the challenge of climate change.

Speaking of justice, let me also mention here that in adopting the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita from July this year, we have removed one more relic of the colonial era. The new code is oriented towards ensuring justice for the victims of crime instead of focusing on punishment alone. I see this change as a tribute to the freedom fighters.

My Dear Fellow Citizens,

The Amrit Kaal, the ongoing period of a quarter century leading to the centenary of our Independence, is going to be shaped by the youth of today. It is their energy and enthusiasm that will help the nation scale new heights. Cultivating the young minds and creating a new mindset

that takes the best of the traditions and the contemporary knowledge is our priority. To this end, the National Education Policy, launched since 2020, has already started showing results.

To harness their talent, the Government has come up with initiatives to facilitate skilling, employment and other opportunities for them. The Prime Minister's package of five schemes for employment and skilling will benefit 4.1 crore youth over five years. Under a new initiative of the Government, one crore youth will be doing internship in leading companies over five years. All this will be a foundational contribution towards building Viksit Bharat.

In India, we view science and technology as part of the quest for knowledge as well as instrument for humanitarian progress. Our achievements in the field of digital applications, for example, are being used as templates in other countries. In recent years, India has made unprecedented advances in space exploration. Along with you all, I also eagerly look forward to the launch of the Gaganyaan Mission next year, which will take a team of Indian astronauts into space aboard India's first human spaceflight.

The world of sports is another arena in which the country has made great progress in the last decade. The Government has rightly prioritised the development of sports infrastructure, and it is showing results. The Indian contingent put up its best efforts in the recently concluded Paris Olympic Games. I appreciate the dedication and hard work of the players. They have inspired the youth. In cricket, India won the T-20 World Cup, to the great joy of a large number of fans. In chess, our prodigies have made the country proud. This is said to be the beginning of an Indian era in chess. In badminton, tennis and other sports, our youngsters are making a mark on the world stage. Their achievements have inspired the next generation too.

My Dear Fellow Citizens,

With the nation all set to celebrate Independence Day, let me once again extend my greetings to you, particularly our brave jawans of Armed Forces who guard our freedom, risking their lives. I convey my greetings to the police and security personnel who keep vigil all across the country. I also extend my greetings to the members of the judiciary and the civil services, as well as the officials of our missions abroad. My greetings also to our diaspora: You are part of our family, making us proud with your achievements. You are great representatives of India's culture and heritage.

Once again, I wish everyone a very Happy Independence Day!

Thank you.
Jai Hind!
Jai Bharat!