

**ADDRESS TO THE NATION
BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
ON THE EVE OF REPUBLIC DAY 2024**

New Delhi, January 25, 2024

My Dear Fellow Citizens,

Namaskar!

1. My heartiest greetings to all of you on the eve of the 75th Republic Day! My heart is filled with pride when I look back and see how far we have travelled despite adversities. The 75th year of the Republic is truly a historic milestone in the journey of the nation in many ways. This is an especially festive occasion, just as we celebrated the unique greatness and diverse culture of our nation during the Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav, when we completed 75 years of Independence.
2. Tomorrow is the day when we celebrate the commencement of the Constitution. Its Preamble begins with the words “We, the People of India”, highlighting the theme of the document, namely, democracy. In India, democratic system is much older than the concept of western democracy. That is the reason why India is called the “mother of democracy”.
3. After a long and difficult struggle, on 15th August, 1947, India became free from foreign rule. Yet, the task of framing the principles and processes that would govern the country and unleash its true potential was still a work in progress. The Constituent Assembly spent nearly three years holding detailed discussions on all aspects of governance and produced the great founding document of our nation, the Constitution of India. Today, the nation gratefully remembers the leaders as well as the officials who contributed to the framing of our splendid and inspiring Constitution.

4. The nation is in the early years of Amrit Kaal, the period leading to the centenary of Independence. This is the time of an epochal transformation. We are given a golden opportunity to take the country to new heights. Contribution from every citizen will be crucial to achieve our goals. For this, I will appeal to all my fellow citizens to abide by our Fundamental Duties enshrined in the Constitution. These duties are essential obligations of every citizen towards making Bharat a developed nation when it completes 100 years of independence. Here, I think of Mahatma Gandhi who had rightly said, “No people have risen who thought only of rights. Only those did so who thought of duties.”

My Dear Fellow Citizens,

5. Republic Day is an occasion to recall our foundational values and principles. When we contemplate any one of them, we are naturally guided to the rest. Democracy implies diversity of culture, beliefs and practices. Celebrating diversity implies equality, which is upheld by justice. Freedom is what makes it all possible. The totality of these values and principles is what makes us Indian. Guided by the sagacity of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, the spirit of the Constitution, imbued with these foundational values and principles, has led us invariably on the path of social justice to put an end to all kinds of discrimination.
6. I would like to mention here that the celebration of the birth centenary of a tireless champion of social justice, Shri Karpoori Thakur Ji, concluded yesterday. Karpoori Ji was one of the greatest advocates of backward classes who dedicated his life for their welfare. His life was a message. I pay my tribute to Karpoori Ji for enriching public life through his contributions.
7. The ethos of our Republic brings together more than 1.4 billion of us to live as one family. For this largest family in the world, co-existence is not an imposition of geography but a source of happiness, which finds expression in our Republic Day celebrations.

8. Earlier this week, we witnessed the historic consecration ceremony of the idol of Prabhu Shri Ram in the glorious new temple constructed at His birthplace in Ayodhya. When this event will be seen in the wider perspective, the future historians will consider it a landmark in India's continued re-discovery of its civilisational heritage. The construction of the temple commenced after the due judicial process and the decision of the highest court of the land. Now it stands as a grand edifice, giving a befitting expression not only of people's faith but also as a testament to people's enormous trust in judicial process.

My Dear Fellow Citizens,

9. Our National festivals are momentous occasions when we together look back and look ahead. If we look at the year since the last Republic Day, there is much to be pleased about. The successful organising of the Group of 20 Summit in the capital, under India's presidency, was an unprecedented achievement. What was all the more noteworthy was the way the people were involved in the G20 events. The ideas and inputs travelled not downwards from the top but upwards from the bottom. The magnificent event provided lessons for all in making citizens participants in strategic and diplomatic matters that are, in the final analysis, going to shape their own future. The G20 Summit also boosted India's emergence as the voice of the Global South, adding a necessary element to the international discourse.
10. We also progressed further towards the ideal of gender equality, when the Parliament passed the historic Women's Reservation Bill. I believe the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhinyam will prove to be a revolutionary tool of women's empowerment. It will also go a long way in improving the processes of our governance. When more women will be involved in the matters of collective importance, our administrative priorities will be more in tune with the needs of the masses.
11. It was also the year when India went to the moon, becoming the first to land on the lunar south pole region. After Chandrayaan-3, the Indian Space Research Organisation rolled out a solar mission as well.

Recently, Aditya L1 was successfully put into the halo orbit. We began the new year with the launch of our first X-ray Polarimeter Satellite called XPoSat which will study space mysteries like black holes. Many more space missions are planned in the current calendar year. I am happy to add that India's space journey is slated to cross new milestones. Preparations for the Gaganyaan mission, our first human spaceflight programme, are proceeding smoothly. We have always been proud of our scientists and technology experts, but now they are aiming far higher than before and delivering too. India's space programme is aimed at expanding and deepening the role of science and technology for the benefit of the entire humanity. The amount of enthusiasm we see in the country for the ISRO's initiatives is heartening. New achievements in this area have fired the imagination of the young generation. More children, I am sure, will become interested in science and cultivate a scientific temper. It will also inspire more youngsters, especially young women, to pursue careers in science and technology.

My Dear Fellow Citizens,

12. India is moving ahead with confidence, which comes from and is also reflected by the robust health of the economy. Our GDP growth rate has remained the highest among major economies in recent years, and we have all reasons to believe that this extraordinary performance will continue in the year 2024 and beyond. What I find particularly noteworthy is that the same farsighted planning that fuels the economy has also given a push to the welfare drive to make the development inclusive in every sense of the term. The government had increased the scope of schemes to provide free food to the weaker sections of society during the pandemic days. These measures were later continued to extend a helping hand to the vulnerable population to come out of that crisis. Expanding the scope of that initiative, the government has decided to provide free food grains to over 81 crore people for five years. This may be the biggest welfare initiative of its kind in history.

13. Moreover, there have been a number of mission-mode schemes to increase the ease of living for all citizens. From the availability of safe and adequate drinking water at home to the security of having one's own home, these are basic minimum requirements, not privileges. These matters are beyond any political or economic ideology and must be seen from a humanitarian perspective. The government has not only expanded and enhanced the welfare schemes, but it has also redefined the idea of welfare itself. It will be a proud day for us all when India becomes one of those few countries where homelessness is a rarity. Similarly, the National Education Policy gives adequate thrust to bridge the digital divide and create a uniform educational structure for the benefit of the underprivileged students. The expanding insurance cover of the Ayushman Bharat scheme aims to bring together all beneficiaries under its umbrella and provides a great reassurance to the poor and the vulnerable.
14. Our sportspersons have raised India's profile on the international stage. In the Asian Games held last year, we made history with a record-breaking tally of 107 medals, and we won 111 medals in Asian Para Games. We are glad to see that women are making very impressive contribution to our medal tally. Our sports-stars have inspired children to take up diverse sports and games, helping them boost their self-confidence. I am sure that our sportspersons, who are infused with this new confidence, will deliver an improved performance in the upcoming Paris Olympics.

Dear Fellow Citizens,

15. In recent times, many conflicts have emerged around the world and several parts of it have been suffering from violence. When each of the two conflicting sides believes that it is right and the other is wrong, the way out should be found in the light of reason. Unfortunately, instead of reason, fears and prejudices have fueled passions, leading to relentless violence. There have been a series of humanitarian tragedies on a large scale, and we feel aggrieved over the human suffering. In such times, we recall Lord Buddha's words:

न हि वेरेन वेरानि, सम्मन्तीध कुदाचनम्

अवेरेन च सम्मन्ति, एस धम्मो सनन्तनो

It means:

“Not at any time are enmities appeased here through enmity but they are appeased through non-enmity. This is the eternal law.”

16. From Vardhaman Mahavir and Samrat Ashok to the Father of the Nation, Mahatma Gandhi, India has time and again shown that non-violence is not just an ideal that may be difficult to achieve but it is a distinct possibility – in fact, it is a lived reality for many. Let us hope that the regions embroiled in conflicts will find a peaceful way to resolve conflicts and bring about peace.
17. India’s ancient wisdom can also help the world find a way out of the global environmental crisis. I am glad to see India at the forefront of promoting renewable sources of energy and taking a leadership position in global climate action. India has launched the ‘LiFE Movement’ for adoption of environment-conscious lifestyle. The global community has appreciated our country’s emphasis on individual behaviour-change for dealing with the issues of climate change. People everywhere can and must contribute by bringing their lifestyle in tune with Mother Nature. That will not only help save the planet for the generations to come but will also enhance the quality of life.

Dear Fellow Citizens,

18. The period of Amrit Kaal is also going to be the period of unprecedented technological changes. Technological advances like Artificial Intelligence and machine learning have moved from headlines into our daily lives at a breathtaking speed. There are numerous areas of concern in the foreseeable future, but there are also exciting opportunities ahead, especially for the youth. They are exploring new frontiers. We need to do all we can to remove hurdles from their path and let them unleash their full potential. What they want is equality of

opportunity. What they want is not the same old rhetoric of equality, but the realisation of our cherished ideal of equality.

19. It is, after all, their confidence that is building the India of tomorrow. Moreover, the mind of the youth is shaped by teachers, who are the real architects of the nation's future. I would also like to make a thankful mention of our farmers and labourers who toil silently and make a mighty contribution to creating a better future for the nation. On the eve of this auspicious occasion, India also gratefully salutes the members of our Armed Forces, Police and Para-military Forces, without whose valour and vigil we would not have scaled the great heights we have.
20. Before I conclude, let me offer my greetings to the members of the judiciary and civil services. My Republic Day greetings to the officials of India's missions abroad and the diaspora community! Let us all dedicate ourselves to serve the nation and fellow citizens in every way we can. My best wishes to all of you in this endeavour.

Thank you.
Jai Hind!
Jai Bharat!