

## **Speech by the Ambassador on the Occasion of Phagwa Celebrations in Suriname**

**Hon'ble President, Shri Chandrikapersad Santokhi ji,**

**Respected Minister,**

**Senior Government officials,**

**Members of the Indo-Surinamese Community, Friends of India, distinguished Guests, and friends.**

Namaste and Good Morning

Happy Holi to all!!

It is a great honor and joy for me to stand before you today as we celebrate Phagwa the festival of colors, joy and love. On behalf of the Government and people of India, and on my own behalf, I extend warm greetings and best wishes to everyone gathered here.

Holi is also a celebration of harmony, and the triumph of good over evil. Likewise, India, in Suriname, it is more than just a festival. It is a symbol of the deep and enduring bonds between our two nations. It reminds us of a shared history that began over 153 years ago, when the first Indian ancestors arrived on the shore of Suriname river. Today, their legacy continues to flourish in Suriname's multicultural society—vibrant, inclusive, and integrated.

India and Suriname share a special relationship, rooted not only in history but also in shared values of democracy, diversity, and mutual respect. Indian diaspora connects both our countries alike an umbilical cord.

Our collaboration has strengthened over time, encompassing domains such as agriculture, technology, health, education, security, culture, and interpersonal interactions. We take pride in the several projects we have worked on together, ranging from healthcare and renewable energy collaboration to capacity building and scholarships under India's ITEC program. Surinamese professionals and young people are benefiting from the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation and ICCR scholarships, Know India Programme which strengthen the bonds between our two peoples. Regarding international politics and contemporary issues including global institution reform and challenges pertaining to the global south, India and Suriname share similar opinions. At numerous regional and multilateral fora, both are actively collaborating.

The cultural linkages between India and Suriname are among the strongest bridges that we share. Festivals like Phagwa-Holi bring this connection into life

and reality. It is pleasing to witness how Suriname has preserved and also enriched the Indian traditions through Baithak Gana and Chautal style of music, various forms of dances, cousins, costumes and language, belief system, customs and rituals and festivals. Today's celebration of Phagwa with such enthusiasm and unity reflects that while oceans separate us, our hearts and cultures remain closely intertwined.

As we gather today, throwing colors and singing Phagwa songs, let us also reaffirm our commitment to strengthening the partnership between India and Suriname. Together, we can build a brighter, more prosperous future for both our peoples.

On this jubilant occasion, I wish everyone prosperous, healthy, peaceful and blissful Holi. May this Phagwa bring color and joy into your lives, and may the bonds between India and Suriname continue to bloom as happens in the spring season.

Phagwa ke hardik badhaiyan!

Dankie wel, Dhanyavaad.