



Ambassador's Speech at the reception hosted on Republic Day [Paramaribo 26 January 2026]

Namaskar...Shubh Sandhya, Good Evening, Goede Avond

Hon'ble President, Her Excellency Dr. **Jennifer Geerling-Simons**, the Chair of the National Assembly of Suriname, Members of the Cabinet, Ambassadors, Parliamentarians, Government officials, & Representatives from UN Agencies, International Organizations and diplomatic community, media personnels, distinguished members of Indian diaspora, friends and colleagues.

With profound joy and gratitude, we extend our heartfelt thanks for your gracious presence on this momentous occasion: the 77th Republic Day of India, which this year coincides with the 50th Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Suriname.

Hon'ble President and distinguished guests,

Since 26th January 1950, we have propelled our Republic forward, guided by the constitutional ideals that form the bedrock of our democracy. Our Constitution—the sacred charter of the world's largest Republic—enshrines the timeless principles of justice, liberty, equality, and fraternity. It is this living document that defines our collective identity as Indians and has provided the blueprint for our nation's transformation.

Today, India stands proudly in eminent positions across international forums. This achievement would not have been possible without the vision and values enshrined in our Constitution. Over the past eight decades, India has made remarkable strides in advancing economic growth and social development for her citizens, even as challenges remain.

Above all, we remain steadfastly proud of our democratic traditions and the resilience of our institutions. Culturally, we celebrate the richness of our composite heritage and the unity that shines through our extraordinary diversity—whether in religion, ethnicity, language, cuisine, attire, rituals, or festivals. This unity in diversity continues to be the heartbeat of our Republic and the source of our enduring strength.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Soon after independence, India had to rely on gifts and imports of food grains from wealthier nations. Today, however, the story is one of remarkable transformation. India now stands as the world's largest producer of rice (28%), pulses, millets, milk and spices, and ranks second in wheat (14%), sugarcane, cotton, groundnut, tea, fruits, and vegetables.

Astounding and comprehensive changes are reshaping the nation. Over 1.35 billion citizens now possess biometric-based identity numbers, while the internet subscriber base has reached 954.4 million, contributing to a tele-density of 85.7%.

India is rapidly emerging as a global innovation hub ranked 38th in the Global Innovation Index 2025 and leading in Central and South Asia. This progress is driven by a thriving startup ecosystem and advancements in cutting-edge fields such as artificial intelligence, space technology, biotechnology, and semiconductor manufacturing. In the revolutionary fintech sector, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) processes more than 640 million

transactions daily, with India accounting for 49% of the global real-time digital payment market.

Digital payment options and the system of Direct Benefit Transfer have fostered inclusion and brought unprecedented transparency. In the process, India has built one of the world's most robust Digital Public Infrastructures. Ranked 3rd globally, India is home to nearly 160,000 recognized startups and more than 100 unicorns.

In the social sector, India continues to prioritize welfare and equity. Under Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest health insurance scheme, affordable coverage is extended to 420 million people. Meanwhile, the PM Poshan nutrition program ensures that about 120 million children receive mid-day meals, strengthening both health and education outcomes.

Hon'ble President and distinguished guests,

India today stands as the fastest-growing large economy in the world. By 2028, it is poised to become the world's third-largest economy, and by 2030, to attain upper-middle income status. The face of India is changing rapidly. From Smart Cities to Digital Highways, from Artificial Intelligence to Big Data, from clean energy pathways to electric mobility transformations are unfolding across every sector.

Technology and innovation hold limitless potential to address the pressing challenges of our time: combating climate change, advancing sustainable agriculture, and ensuring the responsible management of our forests. These pathways of progress reflect India's determination to build a future that is both prosperous and sustainable.

Distinguished guests and friends,

Last year Suriname celebrated 50th anniversary of its independence. The Independence Day celebrations in Surinam in November 1975 was attended by the Deputy Minister for External Affairs, Shri Bipan Pal Dass, who was specially deputed for the purpose. This year marks a landmark in India-Suriname bilateral relations as we commemorate 50 years since the establishment of diplomatic ties on 23rd January 1976.

India and Suriname enjoy time-tested relations founded on mutual respect, trust, and civilizational connections. Since 1976, our nations have nurtured a unique affinity, strengthened by a shared history and a vibrant diaspora that serves as a living bridge between our cultures, reinforcing the values of cooperation and solidarity.

Over the decades, our partnership has witnessed a steady upward trajectory, marked by regular high-level exchanges and expanding collaboration across diverse sectors. These include strengthening opportunities for MSMEs and promoting sustainable growth, joint initiatives to enhance public health systems, food security and agricultural productivity, capacity building and human resource development through ITEC training programs, skill development and knowledge exchange, as well as Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) delivering grassroots benefits to communities in Suriname.

Hon'ble President and distinguished guests,

During last one year period, we have implemented several projects. I would like to share notably implemented projects.

- Supply of 425 metric tons of food grains and other edible items under fully funded food assistance of about USD 10 million by India
- Donation of 4500 military uniforms for Suriname Defence forces
- Laboratory Strengthening at Anton de Kom University

- Rehabilitation of Roblesplein in Nickerie
- ICT Upgrade at NATIN
- Synthetic Jogging Track in Wanica
- Weather stations in Kwamalasamutu and Pusgurnu and other meteorological infrastructure to enhance early warning capabilities

We are also working with the Suriname government to implement and finalize some more projects, such as:

- Setting up a passion fruit processing facility at Melk centrale.
- Solar electrification of a Government building
- Construction of a Center of Excellence in Information Technology
- Renovation of an indoor sports facility in Nickerie
- Old age home cum care center in Wanica
- New quick impact projects under recently signed agreement
- Offers made at India-CARICOM- such as cancer therapy machines, Mobile hospital cubes, Sea ambulance, Hemodialysis machines, artificial limbs and others

We are always looking forward to sharing our experience in the field of critical and cutting-edge technology that gradually evolving in India as we grow with our Surinamese friends.

As a member of the Global South and a valued CARICOM partner, Suriname remains a key partner for India on the international stage. Both nations share converging views on global challenges and continue to cooperate seamlessly at multilateral fora, advocating for a more equitable and sustainable world order.

Recently, we unveiled a commemorative logo, signaling the commencement of a year-long celebration. The logo embodies the spirit of friendship, cooperation, and shared progress. It symbolizes the journey of India and Suriname as partners in development and prosperity, while looking ahead to the next fifty years of collaboration. To honor this Golden Jubilee, we have outlined an ambitious calendar of commemorative activities throughout 2026. These include high-level visits, a Business Forum to catalyze trade and entrepreneurial ventures, friendship week, a cultural extravaganza showcasing Indian and Surinamese cuisine, films, and performances, seminars on Indo-Surinamese migration and future cooperation, and photo and archival exhibitions highlighting five decades of shared achievements.

The Hindustani community, deeply woven into the Surinamese fabric, continues to enrich the nation's diversity by keeping their traditions and culture alive. With this rich cultural heritage and ongoing economic development, the deep bonds of the diaspora strengthen our social, cultural, and economic ties, laying the groundwork for further cooperation and mutual growth.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Every nation's worldview is shaped by its civilization and philosophical traditions. For India, the timeless spirit of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*—the belief that all creation is one family—has inspired us for millennia. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the artists and participants, and to our Embassy and Culture Center team, for their tireless efforts in making this celebration possible.

Allow me to conclude with a peace mantra:

ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः

May all be happy; may all be free from illness.

Jai Hind... Jai Bharat... Jai Suriname.