



## **Speech at Reception on Republic Day [Paramaribo 26 January 2025]**

**Namaskar...Shubh Sandhya, Good Evening, Guten Abend**

Hon'ble President Chandrikapersad Santokhi, First Lady Mellisa Santokhi-Seenacherry, Deputy Chair of the National Assembly of Suriname, Members of the Cabinet, Excellencies, Ambassadors, Parliamentarians, Government officials, and Representatives from UN Agencies and International Organizations and diplomatic community, media personnels, distinguished members of Indian diaspora distinguished friends and colleagues.

We would like to extend heartfelt thanks to all of you for making efforts to join us on this remarkable occasion of 76th Republic Day of India. India celebrated its 76st Republic Day with a spectacular Grand parade today in New Delhi with a chief guest H.E. President Prabowo Subianto, the President of Indonesia.

**Dear friends,**

India declared herself a sovereign democratic republic on 26 January 1950 by enacting a constitution, the world's longest written constitution and a holy book of democracy. In fact, we take pride to associate with a place where the oldest republican system of the world, the Lichhvi republic came into existence in my native state, Bihar in 6th hundred-century before common era.

The Constitution provides the ultimate foundation of our collective identity as Indians; it binds us together as a family. Today, India is taking leadership positions in international forums. This transformation would not have been possible without the blueprint laid down by our Constitution.

During the last seven decades, India has made enormous strides in achieving economic and social development for her citizens. Of course, challenges remain too. First and foremost, we remain proud of our democratic traditions and the strength of our institutions. Total registered voters were 969 million in the last general election of 2025. Socially and culturally, we take pride in sustaining compositeness and the unity in our exceptional diversity, be it in religion, ethnicity, language or food, attire, festivals.

**Ladies and gentlemen,**

In the early days after the independence, we had to survive on gifts and import of food grains from wealthy countries.

Now, India is the largest producer of milk, pulses, spices, tea and cashew. We are now the fastest growing large economy in the world. It is the 5th largest Economy with a GDP close to US\$ 4.25 trillion in nominal terms, and the 3rd in purchasing power parity terms with nearly US\$ 14 trillion.

There are amazing and innovative transformations taking place in India. For example, about 1.35 billion people now have biometric-based individual identity numbers. The internet subscriber base now stands at 954.4 million contributing to a tele-density of 85.7%.

A variety of digital payment options as well as the system of direct benefit transfer have promoted inclusion and brought unprecedented transparency in the system. In the process, we have created a robust Digital Public Infrastructure that is among the best in the world. Total volume of monthly real-time mobile payments is currently 8.6 billion in India. Under Ayushman Bharat health insurance, the world's largest healthcare scheme, India provides affordable health insurance to its 350 million peoples.

**Hon'ble President and distinguished guests,**

With rising self-assurance, we are increasing our participation in cutting-edge research with a series of initiatives. The National Quantum Mission aims to create a vibrant and innovative ecosystem in this new frontier of technology. This month, the ISRO once again made the nation proud with its successful Space Docking Experiment. India has now become the fourth country in the world to have this capability.

We are the fastest growing major economy in the world. 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, a lot is happening in India. Let us create new networks of collaboration amongst our youth, artists, business communities. Technology and innovation have limitless power to provide solutions for Climate Change, for sustainable agriculture and for managing our forests.

**Hon'ble President and distinguished guests,**

Our ancestors carried the spirit of India to the trans-Atlantic shore when put their first steps on the shores of Paramaribo forward in 1973 by anchoring Lallarookh. In the steps of Baba and Mai, you all follow your past, your pride and your culture and history. The Hindustani community is a colorful part of the Surinamese fabric. Hindustani community has beautifully assimilated in the Surinamese society and yet, has preserved and kept their traditions and culture alive. The best of India, be it in field of music, performing art, rituals or language has a place of pride here.

Our relations are cordial that built on mutual understanding, trust, and strong people to-people ties that are further enhancing and expanding in new areas through frequent high-level exchanges. The recent interaction between PM Modi and President Santokhi at the sidelines of CARRICOM further gave impetus to our ongoing partnership and collaboration. Four Quick Impact Projects are soon going to be inaugurated and handed over. We are expecting the shipment of machinery for fruit processing at Melk centrale from India by end of this month.

Similarly, the first tranche of food grains shipments reached Suriname and expected to distribute shortly. I listed a few here, we are working on several projects with the government of Suriname.

With rich cultural diversity and ongoing economic development, the deep bonds of Diaspora, continue to strengthen our social, cultural, and economic ties, laying the groundwork for further cooperation and mutual growth. Let us work together for progress and prosperity of our peoples.

Every nation's world view is shaped by its civilization and philosophical tradition. The spirit of vasudhaiva kutumbakam that has inspired India for millennia—that all creation is one family. It is this timeless current of thought that gives India an unwavering belief in multilateralism and multi-polar world. When we chant the 'Shanti' mantra, we pray not only for human beings, but for every living creature including plants mother earth and space. The ongoing Mahakumbh in Prayagraj the largest congression of humanity can be seen as an expression of the richness of Indian civilization and its heritage. We expect more than 400 million people participation from four corners of the world.

Let me express my gratitude to all artists and participants. Also, last but not least to our Embassy and culture center team for their tireless efforts that put together to make this event happen.

I would like to conclude here with quoting a peace mantra. ॐ सर्वे भवन्तु सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः that means May all be happy; may all be free from illness.

Jay Hind.... Jai Bharat .....Jai Surinam