

**VALEDICTORY ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
AT THE 17TH PRAVASI BHARATIYA DIVAS CONVENTION**

Indore, 10 January 2023

I am delighted to be present at the 17th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas Convention and deliver the valedictory address. I am very pleased to meet you all personally, especially because this Convention is being held physically after a long interval of four years. I take this opportunity to wish you all a happy and productive new year.

I am pleased to welcome His Excellency Dr. Mohamed Irfaan Ali, President of the Cooperative Republic of Guyana as the Chief Guest in this year's Convention. He has his roots in Bihar. His presence has made this event even more special. I also welcome His Excellency Mr. Chandrikapersad Santokhi, President of the Republic of Suriname, who was our Chief Guest at the 16th Pravasi Bharatiya Divas, which had to be held virtually due to the pandemic. I am also happy to note that one of the youngest Indian Diaspora leaders, Ms. Zaneta Mascarenhas, Member of Parliament, Australia, has also participated in the Convention as Guest of Honour for the Youth Pravasi Bharatiya Divas.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Indian Diaspora today has become an important and unique force in the global system. It has grown into an energetic and confident community in every region, and is making stellar contributions to world affairs in leadership positions. Our Diaspora has exhibited extraordinary dedication and hard work, and has overcome many challenges to achieve excellence in all walks of life – including art, literature, politics, sports, business, academics, philanthropy, science and technology. Your achievements give us immense pride and joy.

The Pravasi Bharatiya Samman Awards symbolise the nation's highest recognition of the Diaspora members for their contributions to India and in their home countries. These awards are significant as they not only

show our appreciation and acknowledgment of the achievements of the Pravasis, but also reflect our faith in their resolve to keep India's flag flying high in the world. Our previous awardees have continued to achieve greater heights and win praise for their good work even after receiving the Pravasi Bharatiya Samman. I congratulate this year's winners and hope that these awards will encourage you to scale even greater heights in the future.

Over the last two decades, the Pravasi Bhartiya Divas Convention has served as a unique platform to enable fruitful engagement between the Government, people of India and the Diaspora. We started this tradition of celebrating our bonds with the Diaspora on 9th January, to mark the day when Mahatma Gandhi, a pioneer among Pravasis, embarked upon the revival of India's Freedom Movement against colonial rule on returning to India.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you all know, the nation is celebrating "Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav" on completion of 75 years of Independence. These celebrations are dedicated to those who have played a key role in India's progress up to the present times, and also to those who are instrumental in realising our vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. Therefore, there could not have been a better time to commemorate contributions made by the Indian Diaspora.

The theme of this year's Convention - "Diaspora: Reliable Partners for India's Progress in Amrit Kaal" – also reflects our desire to make you a partner in the achievement of our national developmental goals.

In recent years, the Government has undertaken several initiatives for the benefit of our Diaspora. These are not only aimed towards welfare of those residing abroad, but also towards enabling you all to engage in the task of nation-building.

The Overseas Citizen of India and Person of Indian Origin Card Schemes have been merged, and the Visas for the OCI cardholders have been made life-long. We are also taking steps to enhance safe, orderly and ethical legal migration of Indian youth for overseas

employment. New digital platforms are being used to address grievances, and to help distressed Indian nationals, especially women and migrant workers. We have also undertaken massive evacuation exercises to repatriate Indians and Pravasis from crisis situations, including most recently in Operation Ganga, in Ukraine.

Your ideas and suggestions presented during the thematic discussions over the last three days will be immensely valuable in charting the path ahead. The plenary session discussing women Diaspora entrepreneurs is particularly notable, as it shows the potential of our sister entrepreneurs and business-women in the Diaspora, in shaping the entrepreneurial spirit of our women in all sectors of the economy here in India. In addition, our young Diaspora achievers can play a significant role in fostering the spirit of innovation and development of new technologies among the youth of India.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We are facing challenging times today, with economic and geopolitical upheaval all around us. Amid all these challenges, India is engaging with the world with greater self-confidence and a wider goal of securing national interests. This can be seen in our strong relations with all major countries, and our leadership on various global platforms. As you know, India is presiding over the G20 this year, with the theme “One Earth - One Family - One Future”. This theme, inspired by our ancient philosophy of “Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam” reflects India’s commitment to just and equitable growth for all in the world.

In the next 25 years, India is going to embark on an ambitious journey of collective hard-work, sacrifice and intensive development to transform into a self-reliant world leader by 2047, when we will be celebrating the centenary of our independence.

Your collective power and potential will be a force-multiplier in the nation’s inclusive development. I invite each and every member of our Diaspora family to become a full partner in this journey. You can contribute with your energy, your experience, your ideas, your business acumen,

your investments, your technical expertise and knowledge sharing, to enhance our capacities to fulfill the vision of an Atmanirbhar Bharat.

The call of the soil of the Motherland is something that transcends the barriers of time and distance. While you have built enriching and productive lives in your adopted homes in different corners of the world, our Diaspora brothers and sisters will always hold a special place in our hearts: not only as extended family members, but as responsible stakeholders in India's development.

I once again convey my best wishes to the distinguished gathering here, and wish you all a happy and prosperous year ahead.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!