

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
AT THE PARLIAMENT OF FIJI**

Suva, August 6, 2024

It is my great honour to meet you all, the elected representatives of Fiji, in this temple of democracy. I bring to you, the greetings of 1.4 billion of your brothers and sisters in the largest democracy of the world, India.

I thank the Hon'ble Speaker for giving me this opportunity. This is a reflection of the close relations between our two countries.

I also take this opportunity to thank His Excellency President Katonivere on whose kind invitation, I arrived yesterday on my first visit to Fiji. I also have along with me, our Minister of State Shri George Kurian, as well as two Parliamentarians from our Lok Sabha, Shri Saumitra Khan and Shri Jugal Kishore.

I would like to express my deep appreciation for the strong democratic ethos in Fiji. Each one of you has a very solemn responsibility, of serving the people of this beautiful country.

Despite the vast difference in our size, both our countries have much in common, including our vibrant democracies. Almost 10 years ago, speaking in this same Hall, Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi had underlined some basic values that unite India and Fiji.

These include, "our democracy, the diversity of our societies, our creed that all human beings are equal, and our commitment to the liberty, dignity and rights of every individual". These shared values are eternal, and shall continue to guide us ahead.

I am glad to note that India has been closely associated with your democratic journey, over the last 3 parliamentary elections in Fiji. As a close friend and partner with rich experience of fostering democracy at the grassroots level, India stands ready to partner at all times.

Hon'ble Members of Parliament,

In my short time here, I can see that the rest of the world has so much to learn from Fiji. The gentle Fijian way of life, the deep-rooted respect for traditions and customs, an open and multicultural environment, makes Fiji so special in an increasingly conflict-ridden world. No wonder, Fiji is the place where rest of the world comes to find its happiness.

Fiji today is recognized around the world for its growing contribution to our common efforts, focused on two major global challenges - climate change and addressing human conflicts.

Whether it is shaping the global dialogue on climate change or voicing the concerns of the ocean-states, Fiji has been contributing immensely to the global good. India greatly values and applauds the increasingly prominent role played by Fiji around the world.

You have also made major contributions to global peacekeeping efforts, in some of the most dangerous conflict areas around the world. We salute Fiji's contribution in making the world a better place to live.

In the field of sports, while we may have been recently crowned the T-20 World Champions in Cricket, I must say India has a lot to learn from Fiji in Rugby. We are very happy that one of your legendary players, Waisale Serevi, is India's new National Rugby coach. I do look forward to the day, when our two teams will play each other! I take this opportunity to also convey our heartiest congratulations to the Fiji Mens Rugby team for their wonderful silver medal performance in the Paris Olympics.

माननीय संसद सदस्यगण,

145 वर्ष से भी अधिक समय पूर्व, नियति ने हमारे दोनों देशों को एक साथ जोड़ा, जब “गिरमितया” श्रमिक, पहली बार भारत से फिजी द्वीप के तट पर पहुंचे थे।

यद्यपि उनका यहाँ आरंभिक जीवन खतरे और कठिनाई से भरा रहा, यह जानकर खुशी होती है, कि कैसे “गिरमितया” और उनके वंशजों को इस देश ने अपनाया है। बदले में, उन्होंने अपनी कड़ी मेहनत और परिश्रम से अपनी नई मातृभूमि के निर्माण में व्यापक योगदान दिया है।

मैं फिजी सरकार को “गिरमित दिवस” कार्यक्रम के दौरान राष्ट्र निर्माण के प्रयासों के लिए गिरमित वंशजों के अपार योगदान को प्रकाश में लाने के लिए, धन्यवाद देती हूँ।

1970 के बाद के दशकों में, हमारे दोनों देशों ने मिलकर एक आधुनिक और बहुमुखी साझेदारी तैयार करने का प्रयास किया है। मुझे यह जानकर प्रसन्नता हो रही है कि आज हमारी सहभागिता, राष्ट्र निर्माण के सभी प्रमुख क्षेत्रों में है, चाहे वो sugarcane हो या space!

Speaking of space, I would like to particularly thank the Fijian Government for its assistance to our Aditya – L1 Mission, to place the 1st Space-based solar observatory last year. Your support in hosting the Temporary Telemetry Tracking and Command Centre in Suva for the historic Mission is greatly appreciated.

Our cooperation in Agriculture, Capacity building, Climate change, Clean energy, Digital Partnership, Education, Healthcare, Manufacturing,

Research, Renewable energy and the SME sector continues to grow from strength to strength.

Despite the physical distance between us, we have always had a close bond. No wonder, in times of need, we have been among the first to respond. I am glad to note that the COVID-19 Vaccines provided by India in 2021 under the Vaccine Maitri initiative played a key role in Fiji's successful National Vaccination program.

As we celebrate the 75 years of India's diplomatic presence in Fiji, I am pleased to see the strong growth in our high level engagements, development projects and our people-centric activities.

I am told that in the last 18 months alone, 15 Ministerial level visits have taken place on both the sides. The historic meeting of both our Prime Ministers in May 2023, during the FIPIC-III Summit has given new energy and direction to our bilateral ties.

I am confident that the newly announced projects, including the Super Specialty Cardiology Hospital to be established in Suva, would help to meet the priority needs of the people of Fiji and the wider Pacific region.

Our joint hosting of the highly successful 12th World Hindi Conference last year in Nadi and the high level participation in the Girit Day National celebrations, have helped further strengthen the strong bond between our two nations.

Honourable Members of Parliament,

We are also conscious of the many serious challenges common to us. The foremost one being the fight against climate change and the rise in sea-level, which is a threat to many ocean states.

As a large developing country, frequently exposed to the uncertainties of nature, India also knows very well the deep impact of climate change.

That is why, we are committed to doing our best as a responsible member of the world. Under our G-20 Presidency last year, we gave high priority to the two topics of sustainable development and climate change. We made “One Earth, One Family, One Future” the theme of our G-20 Presidency.

India has considerably reduced its emission intensity, and has also achieved 40% of installed electric capacity through non fossil fuel sources. Between 2017 and 2023, India has added around 100 Giga Watts of installed electric capacity, of which around 80% is from non-fossil fuel-based resources.

In addition to these domestic steps, India has also taken the lead on a number of international platforms for climate action. We sincerely appreciate Fiji for its enthusiastic support to many of these initiatives, including International Solar Alliance (ISA), Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS). We hope Fiji will soon formally join the Global Biofuel Alliance as well.

As a powerful voice of the Global South, India will keep pushing the developed countries for both climate finance and climate technology. We will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Fiji and other ocean states for climate justice.

Hon’ble Members of Parliament,

As India emerges strongly on the global stage, we stand ready to partner with Fiji, according to your priorities, to build a stronger, resilient, and more prosperous nation. Let us come together to unlock the full potential in our partnership for the mutual benefit of people of both our beloved countries.

Thank you.
