

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU
AT THE BANQUET HOSTED BY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL OF NEW
ZEALAND**

Wellington, August 8, 2024

I am profoundly touched by the personal attention and warm reception accorded to me and my delegation by Your Excellency Governor General Dame Cindy Kiro. I am truly delighted to be in your beautiful country. I take this opportunity to convey the heartfelt affection and greetings of more than 1.4 billion people of India, to the friendly people of New Zealand.

Your Excellency Dame Kiro, as I mentioned to you this morning, this is my first visit to New Zealand. I had heard about your beautiful country; but being here only for a day now, I can see why this country is renowned for the warmth and vibrancy of its people and the natural splendor of its land.

Your beautiful Maori traditions and ceremonies have left a lasting impression on me. I express my deep appreciation for the manner in which you have preserved and protected this valuable heritage.

I had fruitful engagements today from the constructive conversations with Your Excellency and with the Prime Minister, to the engaging session at the Education Conference in the Takina Exhibition Center, and the Pukeahu National War Memorial.

India and New Zealand have, over the years, developed a warm and friendly relationship anchored by shared values rooted in democracy and rule of law. We both value diversity and inclusiveness, which is evident in the multicultural fabric of our societies. Our rich cultural exchanges and robust people-to-people ties have played a pivotal role in fostering mutual understanding and goodwill between our nations.

There is a renewed momentum in our bilateral relations, generated by high-level contacts and increased engagement across range of sectors, including trade, defence and agriculture. Our educational institutions have established meaningful linkages, promoting knowledge sharing and innovation. I am glad that tourism has flourished, with more people from our countries exploring each other's unique landscapes and cultures.

The signing of a bilateral Customs Cooperation Arrangement is a positive step, which will facilitate trade between our two countries. I welcome New Zealand's ratification of the International Solar Alliance which would offer us opportunities to collaborate on joint research and development in the field of solar energy. Also, we will be opening our Consulate in Auckland shortly, which is another step towards enhancing our diplomatic ties.

Ladies and gentlemen,

India is now on a transformative developmental journey. We are making strides in all walks of life, from science to sports to space. Today, we are contributing much more to global growth, peace and stability. India is soon going to become the third largest economy of the world. India is the first country to hoist its flag on the southern pole of the Moon. We have also launched 'Aditya' Mission to study the Sun. India became the country with fastest 5G roll-out in the world. India is now home to over one hundred thousand startups, and we are progressing rapidly in the field of digital financial inclusion.

New Zealand has made tremendous advancements in agricultural technology, food processing, dairy development, clean energy and disaster management. I am happy to share that companies of the two countries are already collaborating under the "Make in India" initiative of the Government of India. The utilization of chips manufactured by a New Zealand company in our "Chandrayaan" space Mission, is an example of our business ties and potential collaboration.

As we look to the future, there is immense potential to deepen our engagement and explore new avenues of cooperation. The fields of artificial intelligence, green technologies, agricultural technology, commercial space

explorations offer exciting opportunities for collaboration. We must also strengthen our people-to-people ties through enhanced cultural exchanges, educational partnerships, and sports and youth engagements.

In the global arena, India and New Zealand have consistently worked together to address pressing challenges such as climate change, sustainable development, and international peace and security. Our shared commitment to a rules-based international order and a multipolar world underscores our collective efforts to promote stability and prosperity. We look forward to expanding cooperation between our two countries both in the regional as well as global context.

Ladies and gentlemen,

New Zealand has been home to our Indian brothers and sisters and their descendants, over the last 150 years. Indians are well integrated in the New Zealand society, making meaningful contributions across various fields. They form a strong living bridge between our two nations. It is matter of pride that Yoga and Indian music and dance are gaining popularity in New Zealand and Indian festivals like Holi, Deepavali, Baisakhi are celebrated with full zeal and enthusiasm.

I am convinced that our discussions today will give additional momentum to our expanding partnership across various sectors. Let us work together to build a future that is inclusive, sustainable, peaceful and prosperous for both our nations and our people.

Thank you! Ngā mihi nui!

With these words, ladies and gentlemen, please join me in expressing our good wishes for:

- the good health and well-being of our gracious host Governor General Dame Cindy Kiro, His Majesty King Charles IIIrd,
- the continued progress and prosperity of the people of New Zealand,

- and the flourishing friendship between India and New Zealand.

Thank you.
