

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA  
SMT. DROUPADI MURMU  
AT  
SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL HUB, MARTYR IHADDADEN  
ABDELHAFID UNIVERSITY**

**Sidi Abdellah, Algeria, October 15, 2024**

I am delighted to be here with all of you today. It is, indeed a humbling experience for me to be honoured with the Honorary Doctorate.

This is an honour for my country more than for me as an individual. It is an honour you are bestowing on a country, civilization and a culture that has been an ardent and consistent champion of peace and education since time immemorial.

I am grateful to Scientific and Technological Hub, Martyr Ihaddaden Abdelhafid, Sidi Abdellah for thinking of me and my country for this unique honour. I understand this university, a shining example of India-Algeria collaboration, was inaugurated by President Tebboune in March 2024. Yesterday, first-hand, I witnessed President Tebboune's foresight and vision for 'New Algeria', where Science & Technology will be at the forefront.

My delegation and I bring greetings and good wishes of the 1.4 billion people of India to the friendly people of Algeria and particularly of the world's largest number of youth, around 375 million who constitute 28% of our population and who, like young people of Algeria, are keen to build peaceful and prosperous world.

It is always a pleasure to address young minds in the universities brimming with confidence dedicated to the pursuit of knowledge that directly impacts national development missions.

My dear students,

Now that I am here, let me travel down memory lane and share with you my journey from a tribal under-privileged and remote village to becoming the Head of State of my country.

I was born in a modest family in a village, Uparbeda in the tribal heartland of India, Odisha. My childhood was full of challenges and obstacles. I did my elementary education at a local primary school and then moved to Bhubaneswar for higher studies. I did my Bachelors from Rama Devi Women College in Bhubaneswar and became the first woman from my village to graduate from a university. Before entering politics, I served as a clerk and teacher. Passion for education and empowerment has been a driving force throughout my personal life. As a teacher, I tried to play my humble role in steering lives of my students, especially women students, tried to instill in them the values of knowledge, resilience and compassion. I dedicated myself to serving my nation thereafter. I am now the first person from a tribal community and also the youngest to occupy the highest office of the Republic of India.

Friends,

A key pillar of India's rapid economic recovery is technology-led and women-led growth. The massive digital transformation taking place in India, never seen anywhere in the world stage, has encouraged the participation of women in the workforce. There are about 36% of women out of 4.4 million professionals working in our IT sector. The benefits of technology-based financial inclusion have also gone in a large measure, to the women in rural areas.

I am happy to note that Algeria is keen to promote dialogue with India on digitalization of their retail payment system. We have also made progress in the space exploration and Science and Technology sector. Our Gaganyaan mission, planned to be launched next year, will take a team

of Indian astronauts into the space abroad, in India's first human space flight.

Friends,

Education is undoubtedly the most impactful mechanism for human development, social upliftment and economic development. It brings equality and neutralizes societal inequities, ensuring that the benefits of growth reach even the most marginalized. Education is a means not only for individual empowerment but for national development as well.

In recent years, India has made considerable progress in the field of education. Our literacy rates have gone up significantly. India has one of the world's largest higher education systems with over 58,000 higher education institutions, and more than 43 million students enrolled for higher education. Over the past decade alone, we have created nearly 400 new universities, 5300 new colleges, 75 new institutes of national importance, 14 new All India Institutes of Medical Sciences, 7 new Indian Institutes of Technologies and 7 new Indian Institutes of Management, with half of the new institutions located in rural areas.

With the objective to develop students as enlightened citizens and to lead India into the 'Knowledge Economy' of tomorrow, Government of India has brought several reforms in its education sector. The goal of our recently introduced new National Education Policy 2020 is to transform the education system at all levels. The policy also opens avenues for collaboration with foreign educational institutions.

I want to draw your attention to our flagship program called Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation, popularly known as ITEC program. Under this initiative, so far, 31,000 Africans and 155 Algerians have availed of the benefits of this program.

It is matter of pride for us that ITEC Alumni have carved a niche for themselves in their respective countries. Many of them have become

Ministers, senior diplomats, government officials and leading entrepreneurs. I urge Government of Algeria to utilize this unique opportunity being offered by the Indian Government.

India provides quality education at a fraction of the cost of western institutions to ever increasing number of students from Africa, including from Algeria. We also offer several scholarships and fellowships to African students. I invite educational institutions, governmental departments and youth of Algeria to take advantage of various initiatives of Government of India.

Friends, India-Algeria relations date back to the days of the Algerian liberation struggle against colonialism, when India advocated the cause of Algerian independence at the United Nations and other international fora. Following Algerian independence and the establishment of the diplomatic relations in July 1962, this policy orientation brought India and Algeria closer and our friendly relations continue to this day.

The current developments are but a good beginning. Our relations are a long way from reaching their potential, which can be achieved by the hard working young people of our two nations. I am convinced of the power of youth of this country, and truly believe in their capabilities to take Algeria on a path of glorious development. These young minds will eventually become the bridge-heads for enhancing our robust people-to- people ties.

Once again my deep gratitude to the university for the respect and warm welcome given to me and my country. I express my heartfelt thanks to President Tebboune and Minister Kamel Baddari. I extend my best wishes to the Dean, to all the esteemed faculty members, and students for success in their future endeavours.

To my young friends: May you be the enlightened citizens of 'New Algeria' and a vibrant bridge, building relations between India and Algeria. Today, a new chapter has been added to our historic ties.

Jai Hind!

Shukran!