

MEDIA STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA ON HIS STATE VISIT TO CROATIA

Zagreb, March 26, 2019

1. I am delighted to pay the first ever State Visit from India to Croatia. I thank Madam President and the people of Croatia for their very warm welcome and gracious hospitality. I am deeply honoured to be conferred the Grand Order of the King of Tomislav, the highest award of the Republic of Croatia. On behalf of my country and my people, I accept this honour with great humility. Let me dedicate this award to India-Croatia Friendship. May this special gesture strengthen our friendship forever.
2. I had very productive discussions today with Madam President covering all aspects of our relationship. We appreciated the close cultural ties that exist between our two countries and reaffirmed our commitment to expand economic relations.
3. I am accompanied by a large business delegation spanning various sectors, which will participate in a Business Forum tomorrow. Madam President and I look forward to jointly addressing the Forum. The Indian economy presents enormous opportunities for Croatian companies, particularly under our Make in India, Smart Cities and Digital India programmes. And I invite them to forge technology and investment tie-ups in India. Several Indian companies have already made investments in Croatia in pharmaceuticals, information technology and renewable energy sectors. More are keen to follow.
4. Madam President and I noted the excellent work done by the Indology Department of the University of Zagreb, and by Delhi University, to promote each other's languages and cultures. A Hindi Chair was created at the Indology Department. In response to the enormous interest in learning Hindi, we have signed today an agreement to continue this Chair for another three years. Croatian people also have a special interest in

Sanskrit language. In order to promote study of Sanskrit, we have intensified our cooperation with the Indology Department of the University of Zagreb. I eagerly look forward to addressing the students at the University tomorrow.

5. We find it impressive that Croatia attracted nearly 19 million tourists last year. I am also aware that tourist flow from India to Croatia has been increasing sharply every year. The agreement on cooperation in the field of tourism that we signed today will help deepen our links in this important sector. It is equally impressive that Croatia has established its credentials in various sports at the global level, be it tennis, football, basketball or water polo. Your team's success in FIFA World Cup last year was cheered by people across India. I hope that the agreement that was signed today between the Sports Authority of India and the Department of Kinesiology of the University of Zagreb will lead to joint initiatives for capacity building in sports.
6. This year marks the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the father of our nation and a global icon of peace and nonviolence. To mark this special occasion in Croatia, we have offered a bust of Mahatma Gandhi to the Government of Croatia for public display.
7. Croatia has made impressive strides in science and technology and Madam President and I discussed possibilities of deepening our cooperation in research and development projects.
8. Madam President and I also shared our views on global and regional issues of concerns including UN Security Council reforms, Multilateral Export Control Regimes, and combating terrorism. I thanked Madam President for her strong condemnation of the brutal and barbaric terror attack in Pulwama in India last month. We agreed to work together to develop a strong global response to defeat and destroy this evil force in all its forms and manifestations, and to seek accountability and action from those responsible for such barbaric acts.

9. We discussed Croatia's upcoming presidency of the European Union next year. I conveyed to the Madam President the importance we attach to our Strategic Partnership with the European Union. I also noted how important it was for Europe to be strong to maintain global stability and anchor a multi-polar world. I wish Croatia all success for its upcoming presidency.

10. I once again thank President Grabar-Kitarovic for her hospitality and look forward to strengthening our bilateral relationship.

Thank you.
