

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE RECEPTION FOR INDIAN COMMUNITY AND FRIENDS
OF INDIA IN JAMAICA**

Kingston, May 16, 2022

I am delighted to meet you all today in this beautiful city of Kingston. I thank you for your warm welcome. I bring with me the greetings from your brothers and sisters in India.

I understand that the Indian diaspora has been living in Jamaica for nearly 175 years. I am glad to know that the Indian community is living in peace and harmony with other communities and is contributing immensely to the development of Jamaica.

Today, I met the Most Hon'ble Governor General. I also met the Prime Minister of Jamaica, Mr Andrew Holness who I am told has Indian ancestry. We discussed ways to further strengthen our close relationship.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

India and Jamaica continue to enjoy cordial and friendly relations based on shared democratic values, common linkages of history, membership of the Commonwealth, use of English language and the love of cricket. Economic and commercial interactions between our countries continue to grow despite constraints that include geographical distance. However, there remains considerable potential for enhanced trade and investment. Being developing countries and members of various multilateral fora, we share similar concerns and common aspirations for economic growth, eradication of poverty, improvement in the quality of life of people and promotion of equity.

Our cooperation has continued during the Covid-19 pandemic when we reached out with 'Made in India' Covid-19 vaccines to Jamaica in March 2021 under the 'Vaccine Maitri' initiative of the Indian government. As a mark of solidarity with the people of Jamaica, India had also sent essential medicines and medical equipment to Jamaica.

Jamaican-Indians strengthen the deep root of our cultural linkages and enrich our multifaceted partnership. The Indian diaspora is a living bridge between our countries. It is a matter of pride for us that members of the Indian diaspora are recognised at the highest levels for their contribution to Jamaica.

We are very proud of the achievements of the Indian community in Jamaica. Some of you have risen to the highest government offices in Jamaica. I have been informed that many of you have been conferred with distinctions and honoured by the government here. We welcome this acknowledgment, by the Government of Jamaica, of the contributions of the Indian community.

Ladies and gentlemen,

India's external engagement has undergone a sea change in the last few years. We have now brought the diaspora at the center-stage of our action and engagement. In all my travels abroad, I make it a priority to meet our brothers and sisters living in the countries I visit. I have fond memories of my meetings with our Indian brothers and sisters in the countries where they live. I am truly delighted that I got this opportunity to meet you all here.

Safety and well-being of Indian community everywhere in the world is a high priority for our government. During the worst phase of the Covid-19 pandemic, the government made special efforts to enable Indians to return home from every corner of the world. I am pleased to note that the Indian High Commission in Jamaica was at the forefront of our 'Vande Bharat Mission' and other welfare activities for Indian community. In recent months, our government has successfully evacuated Indian students and people of other nationalities from Ukraine under most challenging circumstances. We will continue to make sincere efforts to further strengthen our links with our diaspora.

As we celebrate 75 years of India's independence and the glorious history of our people, culture and achievements through 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav', I urge member of the diaspora to come forward and join us in

this celebration. Let me take this opportunity to also thank the Indian medical community here for having organized several free medical camps in the last year and a half to celebrate 75 years of Indian independence. Your initiative has been well received and has significantly contributed to the strengthening of people-to-people relations of India and Jamaica.

Some of you have been here for decades, while some others have arrived recently. Many of you have been born here. The more important aspect, however, is that you are together as a community, well-meaning and well-knit. Living away from home, you have maintained your culture and your family values. This makes me feel happy. I understand you have formed a number of cultural associations and organizations. These forums have enabled you to keep your cultural practices alive through celebration of festivals and by maintaining traditions. Through these efforts, your children get to learn their native languages and deepen their connect with India.

Ladies and gentlemen,

India is on a transformational path. Atmanirbhar Bharat or Self-reliant India is a major initiative taken by the Indian Government. India's quest for self-reliance does not mean isolation. Rather it seeks to create capabilities that can help the entire humanity in the true spirit of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" which means "The world is one family".

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Indian economy is rebounding at a fast pace despite disruptions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. We are creating new infrastructure to match our fast paced growth. We are undertaking efforts to take lead in the areas of digital economy, new technologies, climate change related action and developing a knowledge society.

This new India offers immense opportunities for you to participate in its progress and prosperity. We seek your support to this new India that promises to light up millions of homes with progress and prosperity; an India that cares for one and all.

We remain deeply committed to connect with you and to respond to your needs and requirements. We have rolled out several schemes and

programmes for our diaspora. We have launched the Pravasi Rishta Portal which connects the 30 million overseas Indians on a single platform. It also offers consular services seamlessly. We have streamlined and simplified the procedures related to Overseas Citizens of India. There is also a major change in our work culture as seen in delivery of public service promptly and earnestly. Our diplomatic missions today are mandated to be available round the clock and to help and support you, whenever you need it.

देवियो और सज्जनो,

आप लोगों से मिलकर और आपसे बातचीत करके मुझे बहुत अच्छा लगा। मुझे विश्वास है कि आने वाले दिनों में भी, आप सब भारत और जमैका के पारस्परिक संबंध को और अधिक मजबूत बनाने में अपनी महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका निभाते रहेंगे। आप सब लोगों से विदा लेते हुए, मैं आप सभी की सफलता, स्वास्थ्य और खुशहाली की कामना करता हूँ। हम लोग, आप सभी प्रवासी भाई-बहनों का आपके अपने ही देश भारत में स्वागत करने के लिए सदैव उत्साहित महसूस करते हैं।

राष्ट्रपति भवन में आप सबका स्वागत करना मेरे लिए प्रसन्नता की बात होगी। राष्ट्रपति भवन एक राष्ट्रीय धरोहर है। यद्यपि यह भवन, भारत के राष्ट्रपति का कार्यालय और निवास-स्थान है परन्तु, यह ऐतिहासिक भवन, सभी भारतीयों की साझी विरासत है जिस पर सभी भारतीयों का अधिकार है। इसलिए, जब भी आप दिल्ली आएँ, राष्ट्रपति भवन के भ्रमण को भी अपने कार्यक्रम में अवश्य शामिल करें।

धन्यवाद!

जयहिन्द!