

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF ZAGREB ON THE TOPIC “INDIA – CROATIA
RELATIONS- THE WAY FORWARD”**

Zagreb, March 27, 2019

1. It is a privilege for me to be at the University of Zagreb, this historic home of thought and knowledge, which is celebrating its 350th anniversary this year. India’s second President and my illustrious predecessor Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan had visited this university in October 1965. I thank Dr. Boras and the University for this opportunity to once again bring to you the message of India.
2. The University of Zagreb is renowned as a centre for learning and scholarship. We in India have a special connect with this university, and particularly its Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, for hosting the Department of Indology. The rich work that this Department has undertaken in promoting the study of India has been invaluable. In studying India, our languages, our traditions and our cultures, you have truly brought our two countries together. We are privileged to have partnered with you in many endeavours. Yesterday, we launched a Sanskrit Chair and renewed the Hindi Chair. These would yet again deepen our connect and collaboration.
3. In India, we are proud inheritors of the legacy of ancient universities such as Nalanda, which flourished from the 5th to the 12th century A.D. At its peak, more than 10,000 students studied a wide variety of subjects on its campus. Many of our modern universities were founded on the principles of strengthening technological prowess of India. This has paid rich dividends in the expansion of technological frontiers in India, and by Indians across the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

4. Work on Indology is just one element of long history of linkages between India and Croatia, which date back to a time when our two countries were not the same political entities as we are today. We are aware of Croatians venturing to India as early as the 16th century, as

traders, as explorers and as men of ideas. I understand that one of your leaders, Stjepan Radic, was highly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi. This year, we are celebrating the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the Father of our Nation. For him, knowledge and education were about understanding the oneness of humanity and about harnessing the power of truth. On 2nd October, his bust would be unveiled in your historic capital. I do hope you will join the celebrations to remember his legacy, and to imbibe his universal values.

5. Our noted poet and the first non-western Nobel laureate, Rabindranath Tagore, visited Zagreb in 1926. His lectures appear to have profoundly impacted well known Croatian minds. I understand that Tagore is the most translated Indian poet in Croatia, and that your writer Ivana Mazuranic's works have been published in several Indian languages including Bengali and Hindi. These are truly people-to-people links that transcend national boundaries. We are delighted to see so many Croatian associations interested in Indian spiritualism, music, Yoga, and Ayurveda. Intellectual curiosity and yearning in this country is second to none.
6. Our cultural connections are a matter of immense pride for us. On these strong foundations, we now have to build a new-age partnership, a partnership anchored in economic synergies, in geo-political realities, in technology and innovation, in sustainability and the 4th Industrial Revolution, and in the strengths and priorities of the two countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

7. Croatia's progress to a stable and prosperous democracy is indeed inspirational. Your journey as a member of the European Union, a key global partner for India, heralds a new beginning for you and we wish you well. All of us would do well with a stronger Europe, one that should continue to anchor a multi-polar world uplifting multilateralism, strengthening global governance and ensuring adherence to international laws and regulations.
8. As the Croatian saying goes, "nema kruha bez motike" that is - there is no bread without a shovel. And you are certainly working hard to chart a new future. The whole world admired you when you displayed your skill and spirit on the FIFA football field. It reflected not just your sporting excellence, but a bold new confidence to conquer and to succeed.

9. On our side, recent changes in India have been hugely transformational for our economic growth and upliftment of society. There is a new India in the making, an India that is aspirational; that is globally connected; that is impacting the global economy; that is willing to lead international efforts to find solutions to global challenges – be it Climate Change or building a new global architecture to deal with the menace of terrorism.
10. Technology integration has been a key ingredient of our national development policy. We have many recent successes to talk about. The Indian Space Research Organization launched 104 satellites at one go, a feat unparalleled in the world. We are the only country to have successfully launched a mission to Mars in our maiden attempt, and at a cost that is less than what it takes to make a space science-fiction movie by Hollywood! We are now aiming to launch a manned space mission in 2022, on the occasion of the 75th year of our independence.
11. Our biometrics- based unique identification number system, Aadhaar, is perhaps the largest information technology project in the world, and has already reached out to 1.2 billion people across our vast land. Its link with mobile phone and bank accounts has heralded a digital revolution in India.
12. Thanks to our world class institutions of higher learning, we now have the third largest scientific and technical manpower pool in the world, with 162 universities awarding over 4000 doctorates annually. India's skill in information technology is well known. I am delighted that one of our major IT companies operates an office in Croatia almost entirely with Croatian employees. India has a thriving research and development services market, which is expected to reach 38 billion US Dollars by 2020. A third of the top 1000 companies in terms of global research and development spending, now have centres in India. The knowledge economy wrapped around the digital highway and powered by artificial intelligence has immense scope to bring our research-labs together, to bring our entrepreneurs together, and to bring new solutions for health and well-being for our people.

Ladies and gentlemen,

13. Demography is another key element in the India of today. We are perhaps the world's youngest country, with nearly half our population below the age of 25 and nearly two-thirds of our population in the working age group. This is a generation that thrives on innovation and entrepreneurship. They are leading India's start-up culture, particularly in the technology sector. We are now the largest consumer of mobile data in the world, ahead of the US and China put together. We also have the world's second largest internet base. For decades to come, the youth of India will be at the forefront of humanity's efforts to address our most pressing challenges. You have a saying in Croatia that aptly describes this – "na mladima svijet ostaje" that is - the world rests on the youth.
14. Economically, we are the fastest growing large economy in the world, with growth rates of 7% and above for decades. This has pulled millions out of poverty and allowed us to share the benefits of growth. Our economic indicators are robust and we are confident that India will continue to be an engine for global economic growth for the foreseeable future.
15. And in all our efforts, we have not forgotten the essence of India, of pluralism and unparalleled diversity, of democracy, of rule of law, of upholding human rights, of standing up to terrorism and violence, of extending a hand in friendship to the world. Many challenges remain in our journey towards social and economic development, but we are confident that we are on the right path.

Ladies and gentlemen,

16. As I have outlined, there is now a new India before you. Coincidentally, Croatia too, is reaching out to the world. There is much we can do together. My visit, the first by a President of India to Croatia, is to reaffirm our hand of friendship and to invite Croatians, particularly its youth, to venture out to India. I invite you to explore and experience this new India, of hope, of opportunity, of promise.

Thank you!