

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
AT THE INDIAN COMMUNITY RECEPTION SLOVENIA**

Ljubljana, September 17, 2019

1. It gives me immense pleasure to meet all of you. I am truly delighted to be in a country that has great affinity with India. I thank you for your warm welcome. And I thank Ms Ana Vipotnik for her beautiful rendition of Mahatma Gandhi's favorite song – *Vaishnav Jan To Tene Kahiye*. It is a meaningful tribute to him as we celebrate his 150th birth anniversary this year.
2. I am accompanied on this visit by a high level delegation comprising our Minister of State for Women and Child Development, Madam Debasree Chaudhari, she hails from West Bengal; and two Members of Parliament from Lok Sabha, Dr. Ramapati Ram Tripathi from Uttar Pradesh and Mr. Basanta Kumar Panda from Odisha.

देवियों और सज्जनों,

3. आज आप सभी के बीच आकर मैं बहुत प्रसन्न हूँ। मैं आप सभी का अभिनंदन करता हूँ। अभी तक मैंने जिस भी देश की यात्रा की है, उस देश में रह रहे भारतीय समुदाय से मिलने को मैंने हमेशा प्राथमिकता दी है ताकि उन्हें भारत की विकास-यात्रा के बारे में बता सकूँ और उनके परिवार तथा मित्रों की शुभकामनाएं उन तक पहुंचा सकूँ। दूर देश में रह रहे अपने भाइयों-बहनों से मिलना, मेरे लिए एक विशिष्ट अनुभव होता है और इसे मैं अपने हृदय में संजोकर रखता हूँ।
4. Today is a historic day in India-Slovenia relations. I am honoured to pay the first-ever State Visit from India to this beautiful country. I had fruitful interaction with the President and the Prime Minister of Slovenia yesterday. They had high praise for you. I also addressed

the Slovenia-India Business Forum along with the President of Slovenia.

Ladies and gentlemen,

5. The Indian community has found a welcome home in this country. You are contributing in your own ways to the development of Slovenia and to building India-Slovenia ties. And while you do so, I am happy that you have kept Indian values and traditions alive. You are a vibrant reflection of India's rich diversity and cultural heritage. We have sent an ambassador here to enhance our ties and understanding with Slovenia. You are ably assisting him by being true cultural ambassadors of our country.

6. You are also the prism through which the Slovenian people see India. Your hard work, success and warmth for the local people have contributed to building a positive image of India in this country. I convey our gratitude to the people of Slovenia for their generosity and large heartedness towards you.

Ladies and gentlemen,

7. I am pleased to see a large number of Friends of India in this gathering. We admire their love for India, our customs, our beliefs and our way of life. The role that they have played in enhancing understanding between India and Slovenia is commendable. We also deeply appreciate the efforts they have put in creating a network of cultural institutions, dance and Yoga schools, Ayurveda centers and Indian restaurants.

8. I am delighted to know that each year a large number of Slovenians participate in the International Day of Yoga and have adopted Yoga as a part of their daily life. I am also happy that a number of Indian books have been translated into Slovene, particularly those of Gurudev Rabindranath. Slovenia has acknowledged him and his contribution to humanity by erecting a statue in Maribor. Our bilateral cultural understanding is, indeed, deep and special.

Ladies and gentlemen,

9. We attach the highest importance to our Diaspora and their well-being. In recent years, we have taken several initiatives to strengthen our connect with you, and to bring you closer to India. Our OCI Card scheme has been made more flexible for the benefit of many. Our Embassies are more proactive in dealing with your issues. We have used technology, particularly social media, to reach out and listen to your concerns. We are working to make the delivery of Consular services ever more efficient. As an Indian abroad, you should feel proud and rest assured that India will be there for you when you need us. This was the case with over 90,000 Indians whom we rescued from strife and natural disasters overseas in the last five years. Along with them, we also evacuated nationals of 50 other countries.

Ladies and gentlemen,

10. The history of interaction between Slovenia and India goes back ages. Centuries ago, Slovenians travelled to India by land and sea. Indian culture, philosophy and spirituality continue to attract them to our country. Slovenia's beauty is also attracting a large number of Indian tourists. Many Indian movies have also been shot in this charming country. We are keen to deepen this people-to-people contact, through tourism and through cultural exchanges.
11. We are committed to enhance economic relations between our two countries. There is good potential to strengthen trade, investment and technology cooperation. I am hopeful that the fruitful engagements of the Indian business delegation accompanying me with their Slovenian partners will lay down a new path of trade and technology tie-ups. Economic linkages do not just create wealth and opportunities, they also enable social impact. Recently, as part of the Women Empower Expedition, two young Indian women successfully circum-navigated the world in a tiny aircraft. It has given a major boost to the confidence of our women. The aircraft that the women travelled in was built by a Slovenian company - Pipistrel. This mission is a noteworthy

example how economic drive, technology and social objectives converge to bring transformative change.

Ladies and gentlemen,

12. Today, the Indian economy is an important engine of global growth. We are the fastest growing major economy in the world, with robust economic indicators. There is a new dynamism in the country. I would encourage you to visit India, and experience the transformative changes happening. Our globally connected, technologically savvy and enterprising youth are at the forefront of this change. We seek your support and participation in creating a New India, an India where there is progress and prosperity for all.

13. As I mentioned earlier, this year marks the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi and I am very happy to know that the occasion is being celebrated in Slovenia with great enthusiasm. I am told that the Slovenian Government will be releasing a postal stamp to honour Mahatma Gandhi on 27 September 2019. I am also delighted to know that there is a statue of Mahatma Gandhi in Slovenj Gradec and his autobiography "The Story of My Experiments with Truth" is not only available in Slovene language, but also widely read in this country.

Ladies and gentlemen,

14. I see a bright future for the relations between India and Slovenia. I am sure you will continue to contribute meaningfully to the strengthening of the bonds between our two countries and our two peoples. It has indeed been a pleasure meeting you. And before I say good bye, I invite each one of you to visit Rashtrapati Bhavan, when you happen to be in Delhi next. Yes it is my official residence, but it is a monument that belongs to all Indians. We look forward to welcome you.

Hvala lepa, Thank you