



English rendering of PM's address at the 28th Conference of Speakers and Presiding Officers of Lok Sabhas of Commonwealth Countries

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Hon'ble Speaker of the Lok Sabha, Shri Om Birla ji, Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, Shri Harivansh ji, President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, Ms. Tulia Ackson, President of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, Mr. Christopher Kalila, Speakers and Presiding Officers from Commonwealth countries, other delegates, ladies and gentlemen!

Friends,

In a parliamentary democracy, your role is that of the Speaker. Interestingly, the Speaker does not get to speak much. Their job is listening to others speak, and ensuring everybody gets a chance. One common thing about speakers is their patience. They handle even noisy and over-enthusiastic members with a smile.

Friends,

On this special occasion, I warmly welcome you. We are honoured to have you with us today.

Friends,

The place where you are seated is of immense importance in India's democratic journey. In the final years of colonial rule, when India's independence was certain, it was in this very Central Hall that the Constituent Assembly met to draft the Constitution of India. For 75 years after independence, this building served as the Parliament of India, and in this hall, countless discussions and decisions shaping India's future took place. Now, this place dedicated to democracy has been named the Constitution House. Just recently, India celebrated 75 years since the implementation of its Constitution. Your presence in this Constitution House is very special for Indian democracy.

Friends,

This is the fourth occasion when the Conference of Commonwealth Speakers and Presiding Officers is being held in India. The theme of this conference is "Effective Delivery of Parliamentary Democracy." You all know that when India became independent, there were doubts expressed about whether democracy could survive in such diversity. But India turned this diversity into the strength of its democracy. Another major doubt was that even if democracy somehow survived, India would never be able to develop. But India has proved that democratic institutions and democratic processes provide stability, speed, and scale.

India is the world's fastest-growing major economy. Today, India's UPI is the largest digital payment system in the world. India is the largest vaccine producer in the world. India is the second-largest steel producer. India has the third-largest startup ecosystem. India is the third-largest aviation market. India has the fourth-largest rail network. India has the third-largest metro rail network. India is the largest milk producer. India is the second-largest rice producer.

Friends,

In India, democracy means last-mile delivery. With a spirit of public welfare, we work for every individual without discrimination. And because of this spirit of public welfare, in recent years, 250 million people have come out of poverty in India. In India, Democracy Delivers.

Friends,

Democracy delivers in India because, for us, the people of the nation are supreme. We have prioritized their aspirations and the dreams of our citizens. To ensure that no obstacle comes in their way, we have democratized everything—from processes to technology. This democratic spirit flows in our veins, in our minds, and in our culture.

Let me give you an example: a few years ago, when the entire world was struggling with the COVID-19 pandemic, India too faced immense challenges. Yet, amidst those difficulties, India supplied medicines and vaccines to more than 150 countries. The welfare of people, their well-being, and their benefit—this is our tradition

Friends,

Many of you know India as the world's largest democracy. Truly, the scale of our democracy is extraordinary. Consider India's general elections held in 2024. They were the largest democratic exercise in human history. Nearly Nine Hundred and Eighty Million citizens were registered to vote. This number is larger than the population of some continents. There were more than Eight Thousand candidates and over Seven Hundred political parties. The elections also saw record participation by women voters.

Today, Indian women are not only participating, but are also leading the way. The President of India, our first citizen, is a woman. The Chief Minister of Delhi, the city which we are in right now, is a woman. In rural and local government bodies, India has about 1.5 Million elected women representatives. They represent almost 50 percent of the leaders at the grassroots, which is globally unparalleled. Indian democracy is also rich in diversity. Hundreds of languages are spoken. There are over Nine Hundred television channels across different languages. Thousands of newspapers and periodicals are published. Very few societies manage diversity at this scale. India celebrates such diversity because our democracy has a strong foundation. Our democracy is like a large tree supported by deep roots. We have a long tradition of debate, dialogue and collective decision-making. India is called the Mother of Democracy. Our sacred texts, the Vedas, are over Five Thousand years old. They refer to assemblies where people met to discuss issues. Decisions were taken after discussion and agreement. We are the land of Bhagwan Buddha. The Buddhist Sangha used to have open and structured discussions. Decisions were taken through consensus or voting.

Further, there is a 10th-century inscription from the Indian state of Tamil Nadu. It describes a village assembly that worked with democratic values. There were clear rules for accountability and decision-making. Our democratic values have been tested by time, supported by diversity, and strengthened generation after generation.

Friends,

Almost 50 percent of the total population of the Commonwealth resides in India. Our effort has always been that India contributes as much as possible to the development of all nations. In the Commonwealth's Sustainable Development Goals—health, climate change, economic growth, and innovation—we are fulfilling our commitments with complete responsibility. India continuously strives to learn from all of you, and it is also our effort that India's experiences benefit other Commonwealth partners.

Friends,

Today, as the world is passing through an era of unprecedented change, it is also time to create new pathways for the Global South. India is strongly raising the concerns of the Global South on every global platform. During its G20 presidency, India placed the concerns of the Global South at the center of the global agenda. India's constant effort is that whatever innovations we make, they should benefit the entire Global South and the Commonwealth countries. We are also building open-source tech platforms so that our partner countries in the Global South can develop systems similar to those in India.

Friends,

One of the key goals of this conference is to explore how we can promote knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy in different ways. In this, the role of Speakers and Presiding Officers is very important. This work connects people more closely with the democratic process of the country. The Indian Parliament is already engaged in such efforts. Through study tours, customized training programs, and internships, citizens have had the opportunity to understand Parliament more closely. In our Parliament, we have begun using AI to translate debates and House proceedings in real time into regional languages. Resources related to Parliament are also being made more user-friendly with the help of AI. This is giving our young generation better opportunities to understand Parliament.

Friends,

So far, I have had the opportunity to visit more than 20 member countries associated with your institution. I have also had the privilege of addressing several parliaments. Wherever I went, I learned a great deal. I immediately shared every best practice with our Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha. I am confident that this conference will further enrich this process of learning and sharing. With this hope, I extend my best wishes to all of you.

Thank you!

MJPS/ST

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