

Text of Vice-President's Address To The Officer Trainees of Indian Defence Estates Service (IDES) 2024 Batch

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Good evening, all of you.

Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh, Defense Secretary. Government of India. I need to congratulate him, his team and our defense forces led by the CDS and the visionary leadership of the Prime Minister for the very successful Operation Sindoor, which continues.

22nd April 2025 was the day when India's soul was challenged. Bharat has always stood for inclusivity. That was sought to be shredded and thrashed by perpetrators of crime, the terrorists from across the border. The Prime Minister's resolve was translated into ground reality by administrative leadership of Shri Rajesh Kumar, defense leadership of CDS General Anil Chauhan, and political leadership of global repute, the Prime Minister of the country.

We demonstrated to the entire world that we are sensitive for civilian population. Our object is not to hurt people, but to hurt the terrorists. Bahawalpur and Muridke are proof of it. The might of our Brahmos speaks commendably of our indigenous production of defense equipment. Our Akash missiles protected our Akash. The world came to realize, Bharat always stood for peace, harmony, but would not spare the terrorists.

But what is more remarkable, boys and girls, is that India's culture all through has been that issues have to be determined by diplomacy and dialogue. There is no room for terrorism in the world. We have advocated zero tolerance for terrorism throughout.

Atal Bihari Vajpayee ji said, "we have to live with our neighbors. We can't choose them". But sometimes, and this has been demonstrated in recent times, tough actions are needed. But the world is stunned that our calibration was precise, penetrating, definitive, crossing international borders, deep into the heart of that country. Only terrorist hideouts were devastated.

No one is asking for proof. The coffins being taken to Qabristan accompanied by military brass, by terrorists globally proscribed and politicians. Rajesh ji, you and your team have to go a long way, but congratulations on what you have accomplished because war has had a paradigm shift. It is no longer conventional. It is being fought now through technology.

But more importantly, it is the mindset of the people, their attitude that defines a nation. I'll come to that a little later.

I have had the benefit of listening to Ashik Hussain. Very graphic description, Rajesh ji. And I'm elated that you have really trained the entire group, which is fairly balanced because four officers are more than seven that are present here. As is on the dais, one is equal to four.

My young friends, To address you is a privilege, is an honor. I'll tell you why, Our demographic dividend for youth is global envy. 65 % of our population is below 35 years of age. The median age of this country is 28, that of China and the US is around 38, 39, and Japan 48. Now, you are the chosen ones.

You have got the opportunity to serve Bharat, home to one sixth of humanity, and look at the area of your working. If you commit yourself, keeping into view our civilizational ethos, we are a unique nation. No nation can boast or claim to be closer to us, 5,000 years of heritage, culture, legacy, knowledge, wisdom, repository. In such a situation, If you engage, which you are engaging, your seniors are engaging, you can define to the entire country how to manage the estates, how to manage ecology, how to manage environment, how to raise herbal gardens, what is sustainable development, how to protect, how to use modern technology. I was so happy and delighted when I heard the young officer, even Machine Learning is being used.

Boys and girls, there was a time when the entire world looked at Industrial Revolution. There was a time when second Industrial Revolution came. But what we are witnessing in the shape of disruptive technologies is a paradigm shift every day. Artificial intelligence, Internet of things, Blockchain and all are being used in our daily operations. They are of great use to you. But you will have to have a human face because you will have to do everything to make life better for those who are part of your system but who are prepared to make supreme sacrifices for the nation so that people like me and others can have a sound sleep.

And therefore, there will be challenges. Challenges will be to create divisiveness. For example, we have seen global conflagrations. Two of them in particular, you know them. These have become open-ended. Look at the devastation of property, human lives, their misery. And look at our calibration.

We taught them well. We chose Bahawalpur and Muridke, and then brought conclusion temporarily. Operation Sindoor is not over. It continues. Some people ask a question. Why was it stopped? We are a nation that believes in peace, non-violence, land of Buddha, Mahavira, Gandhi. We do not wish to kill even living beings. How can we target human beings? The idea was to generate sanity, generate a sense of humanity in the others.

The lesson has been learnt hard, but some of us have to understand and appreciate. Don't be guided by narratives outside. All decisions in this country as a sovereign nation are taken by its leadership. There is no power on the planet to dictate India how to handle its affairs. We do live in a nation and nations that are a comity. We work in togetherness, we work in tandem. We have mutual respect, diplomatic dialogues.

At end of the day, we are sovereign. We take our own decisions. But is it required to play every bad ball? Is it required to have wrestling sessions as to who said what? One who scores good runs on the cricket pitch always leaves bad balls. They are tempting, but not attempted. And those who attempt, you have safe gloves of the wicket keeper and someone in the gully. Therefore, always believe in the nation, always believe in Bharatiyata. Our mindset has to be there because there will be forces out to destroy our inclusivity. There will be forces that cannot digest India's rise because no one expected when the entire world was reeling under economic depression, India's economy was robustly stout. At any point of time when economies were challenged and unable to make even 1 % growth per annum, we were above 6%.

Continually having this record for about a decade and demonstrated by the rise in numbers. From 11th economy we are fourth now, will be third shortly but our object is not to just simply grow our economy. Our object is to develop the people. 'Viksit Bharat' is not our dream.

It is not even our destination now. We are marching in that direction. Every day we are progressing towards that direction. And that's a big challenge because 10 years of phenomenal growth has given the people a taste of development.

People of my generation never believed, Rajesh ji, there will be a toilet in the house, a gas connection in the house, internet connection, piped water, road close by, school or health centre, such world-class trains to travel. No, We never imagined!

So the nation now has become globally the most aspirational nation in the world. Thanks to you people but

you need to know your opportunity basket is rising. This basket is getting bigger and bigger. I reflected at a place, Kota, Coaching centers. These are silos. Coaching is needed for skill. Coaching is needed to make you self-dependent.

For a limited number of seats, all over the country there are coaching centers vying with one another for advertisement space in the newspaper. Not one. One page, two pages, three pages, sometimes four pages in a row. And what a spectacle! Putting you boys and girls in photographs? No. This is not Bharat. We can't have commodification and commercialization. We have to believe in Gurukul.

You have to come out, youth has to come out of the silos. You have to know the opportunities elsewhere. Those opportunities are also very necessary for development of the nation. I am sure you will share your process with others. I am not against anyone, but why should coaching become an integral part of education?

When after more than three decades, the nation has been blessed after getting input from stakeholders in hundreds of thousands, National Education Policy. Why coaching? Coaching has to make up for a challenge. Coaching has to improve your skill. We can't have people cramming and then getting through. We want thinking minds to get in and go there.

Always bear that in mind. You will be doing a job which is very tough because you will invariably be in connect with civilian population in some way or the other. And one aspect which is, I am slightly concerned. I am inviting attention of Rajesh ji also.

Development, civilian development, close to the proximity of your estates requires your sanction. That sanction often gets into the domain of discretion suffers delay. I would urge, evolve a mechanism or a protocol. Let people know about it, what height they can have. Why should system come into play? With the kind of technology we have, we should be fully aware. I have suggested similar thing, Rajesh ji, with development coming around airports.

Why can't we put on one platform. This is the area. If your building is coming up here, height will be this. Yet agencies have to be hired. People have to pay for it. Delay takes place. Now you can take lead. You will earn goodwill of the people around. You have to engage diligently in making your area, which is so vast, eco-friendly.

This can be nerve center of research and development when it comes to herbal plants, when it comes to the patterns of afforestation. These are the areas where you can teach the world at large what is sustainable development.

I don't want to say much on this occasion except you are living in times when to be an Indian is a global tag people look for. You are living in times where you only have to have an idea. You have to ideate, execution is not difficult. And this has been demonstrated by the Prime Minister.

When it started in 2014, the terrain was difficult. Headwinds were there. All around air pockets. Atmosphere was of depression, and now all around, hope and possibility. Anything can happen. And that being the situation, he started with a mission. He developed passion for it, put it into execution. At such a large scale, A scale which the world is stunned because we are 1.4 billion people.

Rajesh's colleagues in the Ministry of Finance decided in 2014-15 500 million people in banking account. Is it possible? It was done. And that has helped develop transparency, accountability, no leakage, direct. Boys and girls, is everything for you to be proud of your service, of your job, of your nation, of your culture, and therefore use every moment for it.

Be the role models. I am sometimes disturbed. How can we have public disorder? Public order is challenged. How can there be destruction of public property, private property? How can we allow people? who engage into these nefarious activities to go scot-free. Because we overlook them as citizens. We depend on the system. Why? Every citizen of this country defines the nation.

He is custodian of our culture, its integrity. There are details which you have learnt recently that we had challenges during Operation Sindoor, even from within. It was overcome. We cannot afford it.

And therefore, my appeal to you, and through you, appeal to the entire youth of this country, there is enough on your table. You come out of your silos, avail the opportunity, face the challenge. Go after your aptitude, you will succeed. And those like you who are lucky, so well trained at multiple institutions by very experienced hands, you have to deliver. Please don't take shortcuts, Don't be prey to easy temptations. Always believe in rule of law. Departure from rule of law is ruinous, dangerous. Gets you stigma, not for your generation and family, but your succeeding generations. Always be upright.

My very best wishes to you, that you are part of a system, Indian bureaucracy, where you will be able to serve Bharat. Maybe away from this service you can get a little more. The people sitting here on the dais and Rajesh ji, they can get multiple times more comfort and money. They will never get the joy and satisfaction of serving the nation, one sixth of humanity. You have that opportunity.

My best wishes to you. Thank you so much.

God bless you.

JK/RC/SM

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