

Transform Cantonment Boards into smart, green & sustainable urban ecosystems in sync with Govt's Viksit Bharat vision, aspire to achieve the target by 2035: Raksha Mantri to IDES officers

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Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh has called upon the Indian Defence Estates Service (IDES) officers to strive for the development of Cantonment Boards into smart, green & sustainable urban ecosystems in sync with the Government's vision of transforming India into a developed country, and aspire to achieve the target by 2035. He was delivering the keynote address at 'MANTHAN 2025', a two-day national conference organised by the Directorate General of Defence Estates (DGDE) on the central theme '*Strategic Roadmap to Viksit Bharat @2047*', in New Delhi on September 18, 2025.



Appreciating IDES officers for successfully fulfilling a dual responsibility – managing over 18 lakh acres of defence land and ensuring the welfare of civilians residing in 61 cantonments pan-India, Raksha Mantri stressed on the need to develop cantonments like modern cities by continuously upgrading systems and processes to make service delivery more efficient, transparent & citizen-friendly. “We must increase digital services so that people can avail transparent and timely services from home. We must increase citizen participation so that the residents become partners in the future planning of Cantonments. We must transform Cantonment boards into modern, transparent, and accountable institutions that can deliver services that meet the demands of the times. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that Cantonment residents have the best civic amenities and a quick grievance redressal mechanism,” he added.



Underscoring the need to enhance the Ease of Living of the residents, Shri Rajnath Singh pitched for advancing digital platforms such as e-Chhawani 2.0 with the inclusion of AI-driven grievance redressal, multilingual services, and smart health. There is a need to specifically focus on the welfare of the poor, the disabled, senior citizens and special children in the Cantonments, he said, adding that future cantonments need to be smart, equipped with smart power systems, renewable energy grids, EV charging hubs, smart waste-to-energy plants and AI-based surveillance systems.

Raksha Mantri endorsed for financially independent IDES and Cantonment Boards, urging them to brainstorm on the subject and prepare a framework for the realisation of the vision. He extended the Government's full support in this endeavour.

Shri Rajnath Singh acknowledged the efforts of DGDE towards promoting Ease of Doing Business in Cantonments, including the launch of platforms such as E-Connect to encourage small businesses, entrepreneurs and start-ups. He also appreciated their resolve of creating an eco-friendly Cantonment Boards. "Today, when greenery is on a decline, Cantonments show us that development and environment can go hand in hand," he said.

In view of the continuous advancements in the field of technology & innovation, Raksha Mantri exhorted the officers to constantly upgrade themselves by honing their skills and enhancing their knowledge. "One must not consider work as merely a job. It is a medium of nation-building. Make the best use of your talent, energy and time. Improve yourself every day and learn new skills. Every effort you make is making the nation stronger," he told the officers.

Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal AP Singh, Defence Secretary Shri Rajesh Kumar Singh, Director General Defence Estates (DGDE) Shri Shailendra Nath Gupta and DGDE-designate Smt Shobha Gupta were among the dignitaries who attended the event.



The inaugural session featured special presentations on the outstanding initiatives and achievements of DGDE over the last one year in the domain of defence land governance, as well as strategic roadmap to Viksit Bharat @ 2047. Day-2 conference will include sessions by Secretary, Department of Land Resources Shri Manoj Joshi, Attorney General for India Shri R Venkataramani, Deputy Comptroller and Auditor General of India Shri Subir Malik among other prominent thought leaders and experts.

The conference is focusing on the evolving role of DGDE in re-imagining defence land management, leveraging advanced digital tools & technologies and strengthening governance frameworks & sustainability. It is witnessing a series of insightful sessions and lectures by senior government functionaries & domain experts on topics critical to the future of land management in the defence sector.

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