

Address by the President of India Shri Ram Nath Kovind on the occasion of presentation of the President's Standard to 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron

It gives me great pleasure to be with you on this momentous occasion to award the President's Standard to the 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron of the Indian Navy. I would like to congratulate all officers and sailors associated with the squadron for achieving this feat. I compliment you all for the impressive parade and impeccable turn out.

The timing of this award could not have been more befitting as our nation is celebrating '*Swarnim Vijay Varsh*'. The presentation of the Standard is a testimony to the exceptional service rendered by officers and sailors, past and present, of this squadron to our nation.

The 22nd Missile Vessel squadron has undertaken a steady journey over the past five decades. The glorious history of this squadron began in 1970 with the induction of eight ships of OSA I class from the USSR. Known for their speed and firepower, these ships played a crucial role in the 1971 war. Just four days ago, on December 04, we celebrated the Navy Day. As we know, Navy Day is celebrated on that day to commemorate the successful naval actions in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal during 1971 war.

Operations Trident and Python saw our ships sinking Pakistan Naval Ships on the western sea board and striking a lethal blow to the enemy war effort. Fifty years ago, on this day, the 08th of December, Killer squadron ships set ablaze the Karachi harbour, crippling enemy morale, enforcing blockade on Karachi and achieving total sea control. The fact that these ships, primarily acquired for shore defence, turned out to be the most potent offensive strike force for our Navy in battle symbolises the sharpness and bravery of our Navy personnel.

Over the years, the 'Killers' squadron has constantly evolved through the induction of Veer and Prabal class of ships. I am happy to note that the Prabal class ships are built in India. It showcases the Navy's commitment towards indigenisation and our vision of '*AtmaNirbhar Bharat*'. I look at this commitment of the Navy as a tribute to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj who is regarded by many historians as the founder of India's battle-ready naval force in the 17th century.

I am happy to note that the Squadron has earned several honours and awards for conspicuous gallantry and distinguished service. This includes MahaVir Chakra, Vir Chakra and Nausena Medals, which is a proof of the bravery of the Killer Squadron.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am told that the ships of this squadron have been deployed for a multitude of operations. They are securing our maritime borders through mission based deployments. They are also undertaking diplomatic missions in the Gulf of Oman and Persian Gulf and anti-piracy operations.

Our nation is a maritime nation and our navy has a huge role to play in furtherance of our foreign policy and in protecting our national interests and commercial aspirations. It is a matter of great satisfaction that the Indian Navy has been successfully safeguarding our extensive maritime interests with resolve and tenacity.

A large share of global maritime trade transits through the Indian Ocean Region. Therefore, maintaining peace and tranquility in this region is of paramount importance, not only for us, but also for the entire global community. Today, as one of the largest navies in the world, the Indian Navy is looked upon by our maritime neighbours as a preferred security partner in the Indian Ocean region.

The emerging geopolitical challenges in the Indo-Pacific region present India with an opportunity to play a pivotal role. As one of the leading navies of this region, I am told that the Indian Navy has invested significant effort in meeting all regional commitments and furthering our engagements with partners in the Indo-Pacific.

I am happy to note that the Indian Navy has also been at the forefront to render assistance to the people during humanitarian crises or natural disasters, within the country and beyond. The Navy played a critical role in repatriation of Indian citizens during COVID-19 and rescue operations during Cyclone Tauktae. Your extraordinary efforts, in hazardous sea conditions have brought relief and solace to many fellow citizens and their families. I congratulate all of you for your untiring efforts in providing relief and hope to the people facing calamity, distress and hostile situations.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this momentous occasion, I would like to congratulate all veterans and serving personnel of the Squadron for your great service to the nation. I am told that some of the veterans who have been part of Operation Trident during the 1971 war are also present here with us. Let us express our admiration for them with a big round of applause. You have served the nation with great honour and distinction. Your untiring efforts and sacrifices have made our nation stronger and safer. I also pay homage to the brave sailors and officers who made supreme sacrifice defending the nation. India will forever remain grateful to them and their families.

I wish the 22nd Missile Vessel Squadron of the Indian Navy the very best for the future. The nation is proud of you. I wish you and your families a glorious future.

Thank you,
Jai Hind!