

Following is the full text of speech –

“I am delighted to be here amidst all of you today. I am aware that Wellington is home to Defence Services Staff College (DSSC), the oldest and most prestigious tri-services institution of the nation. DSSC’s sterling contribution to training and educating the future leaders of armed forces of India and friendly foreign countries and selected civilian officers, is admirable indeed.

I am also happy to see amongst you the officers and soldiers of the Madras Regiment which has a glorious history of more than 275 years. I am aware that the Madras Regimental Centre has trained and contributed some of the finest men to the Indian Army who have time and again proved their worth in peace and war with distinction. The endless list of battle honours and citations to the regiment’s credit bears ample testimony to this fact. I am also aware that the medical fraternity of the Military Hospital Wellington, some of whose members are here in this gathering, have rendered exemplary service to the Defence services fraternity stationed in Wellington Cantonment.

The healthy, salubrious climate of Nilgiris and the association of Wellington with the armed forces has made this place a favoured retirement abode for veterans including our late Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw. I am happy to see some of you in the audience here. We value and respect immensely the contribution of each one of you towards nation building.

Dear friends,

Today, as you are aware, India is facing multiple security challenges in a highly complex and unpredictable geo-political environment. We are facing both symmetric and asymmetric threats from outside and within. Therefore, our armed forces should be fully prepared to handle any challenge and repel any security threat firmly. Historically, India has never been expansionist in its outlook. Our approach has always been of peaceful coexistence and one designed to deter the forces of terror and disruption. The nation is confident that any attempt to challenge India’s sovereignty by inimical forces would be dealt with strongly by our security forces.

As you know, wars today are no longer fought on battlefields alone. The hybrid nature of conflicts often makes it difficult to decide clear winners or losers in the conventional sense. Information and cyber warfare, increasing use of drones and robotics and space-based assets have brought a paradigm shift to the battlefield. Therefore, our armed forces should focus on and develop capabilities in these new and emerging areas of conflict. It should be our vision to develop the Indian military into a 'future force'.

Dear officers,

As we step into the future, you will have to graduate from single service competencies to multi domain challenges which require a thorough understanding of joint and multi domain operations. As Directing Staff and trainers of this prestigious Institution, you have to be the catalysts of change and inculcate a sense of jointness and synergy amongst all students as you mould future leaders and soldiers.

Self-reliance in defence and aerospace technology assumes paramount importance in our endeavour to create a SAMARTH, SAKSHAM BHARAT. It is praiseworthy that the Government has taken several policy initiatives and reforms to promote indigenization and ‘Aatmnirbharta’ in defence manufacturing. Apart from several other key policy measures, the conversion of Ordnance Factory Board (OFB) into seven new defence companies is also a praiseworthy move that would provide autonomy while enhancing efficiency.

Today, geostrategic and geopolitical compulsions, terrorism and climate change, have added to the complexity of the security matrix. Therefore, there is a need to have a deeper understanding of such issues.

As a nation, we not only have to secure our national interests in the changing world order but also cater to emerging security challenges. A change in the security paradigm with time is today’s reality. And to deal with these challenges, we need to constantly strengthen our preparedness and draw up a robust strategy.

Faculty members and trainers here are seasoned Gurus nurturing 21st century military professionals who are knowledge warriors and thought leaders. I am pleased to learn that during COVID times, DSSC ran courses successfully by proactively adopting a hybrid system of online and contact teaching modules.

The armed forces of our country are amongst the most respected entities of our great nation. They have earned the regard of their fellow citizens through their untiring efforts and great sacrifices. Our valiant soldiers have scripted several chapters of glory in the annals of our history with their sacrifices. Be it fighting

external aggression or insurgencies or aiding civil administration during the times of natural calamities, the men and women in uniform have always done the nation proud.

I would like to convey my appreciation for the outstanding grit and determination displayed by men and women of the armed forces in dealing with the situation on our borders as well as the recent COVID-19 pandemic. I feel elated when I interact with members of the armed forces. I always find their high morale and dedication to duty extremely inspiring.

It is important that people should be made more aware of the dedication and sacrifices of our brave soldiers. Recently, I visited a University in Haridwar where they had built a 'Wall of Heroes', decorated with the pictures and descriptions of the Param Veer Chakra awardees. Such monuments should also be erected in other educational institutions to infuse a sense of patriotism and respect for armed forces in our younger generation.

Dear friends,

India has had a glorious tradition of women warriors in history. The Greek historian Megasthenes tells us that the great king Chandragupta Maurya was guarded by a group of female warriors who were specially trained in the art of war. During the medieval period and anti-colonial struggle, Indian women had shown great courage, resilience and fighting spirit. Rani Durgavati of Gondwana, Rani Abbakka, the Tuluva queen, Rudrama Devi, Kittur Chennama, Rani VeluNachiyar, Laxmibai and Begum Hazrat Mahal are some of the glowing examples of outstanding military generals who earned praise even from their enemies.

It is gladdening to note that several initiatives have been undertaken towards empowering Women in the Services. Permanent Commission of women officers has been implemented and all Sainik Schools and the prestigious National Defence Academy are now open for girls. I am happy to see women officers being posted in the fighter stream of the Air Force, onboard naval ships, in the Corps of Military Police and also in Missions abroad. These are signs of a welcome trend. It is my firm conviction that all steps should be taken to give women equal opportunities in every sphere of life.

In conclusion, I wish the College and MRC and its faculty the very best in their efforts towards shaping the future leadership and soldiers of our Armed Forces.

Jai Hind!"