

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA
SMT DROUPADI MURMU
ON THE OCCASION OF COMBINED GRADUATION PARADE AT
AIR FORCE ACADEMY, DUNDIGAL**

Hyderabad, June 17, 2023

I am delighted to be here at the Combined Graduation Parade of Indian Air Force Officer Trainees. I congratulate all the trainees being commissioned into the different branches of the Indian Air Force. My special congratulations to all the award winners and the champion squadron for their excellent performance. I congratulate the trainees from friendly foreign countries. Their participation strengthens relationships between our countries.

I also congratulate the proud parents of the cadets. They have supported their sons and daughters in achieving this landmark in their career and life. I also compliment the faculty and training staff of the Academy and other institutions who have mentored the cadets.

I appreciate the cadets on parade for their impressive turnout, and flawless drill. It demonstrated your consistent training and hard work.

Your career is challenging, rewarding and highly honourable. You have to carry forward the great legacy of those who have served in the IAF before you. The great role played by the brave warriors of the Indian Air Force in defending the country in the wars with the hostile neighbour in 1948, 1965 and 1971 is written in golden letters. They demonstrated the same resolve and skills at the Kargil conflict and later, in destroying the terror hideout at Balakot. Thus, the Indian Air Force has a legendary reputation of professionalism, dedication and self-sacrifice. You must be guided by the same determination to win amidst adversities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The IAF also contributes to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Recently the IAF sprang into action despite adverse weather conditions during the recent earthquake in Turkiye and Syria to provide medical aid and disaster relief. Earlier, the successful evacuation operation to airlift more than 600 Indians and other nationals stuck in Kabul, involving flying and landing in a hostile environment is a testimony to the high capabilities of the Indian Air Force. The IAF also made praiseworthy contribution in combating the disaster caused by Covid-19 by ensuring air-lifting of relief and rescue teams along with rescue equipments.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Together our defence forces protect land frontiers, large coastline and territorial waters and a huge air space. The ability to absorb technology at a rapid pace will be essential for defence preparedness at land, sea and air. Each and every officer of the armed forces has to keep in mind an integrated perspective of defence preparedness.

I am happy to note that our Air Force is taking steps to be ever-ready, especially future-ready keeping in view the overall security scenario including the challenges of fighting a high technology war in a network-centric future battle space. In this context, modernisation of the Air Force through induction of Rafale fighter aircraft, the Apache attack helicopter and the Chinook heavy lift helicopter strengthens our operational capabilities. I am also happy to know about the indigenisation efforts of the Ministry of Defence for realising the national agenda of Atma-nirbhar Bharat.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am glad that the Indian Air Force is now inducting women officers in all roles and branches. There is a substantial number of women fighter pilots which is bound to increase.

In April 2023, I flew a sortie in a Sukhoi 30 MKI fighter aircraft at the Tezpur Air Force Station in Assam. I flew for nearly 30 minutes

covering Brahmaputra and Tezpur valleys with a great view of the Himalayas before returning to the Air Force Station. It was indeed a great experience to fly at a height of about two kilometres above sea level at a speed of about 800 kilometres per hour.

Dear young officers of the Indian Air Force,

You will no longer be the 'boys' and, 'girls' who came to this Academy as trainees. Now you are going to be 'officers' ready to face challenges and take up responsibilities. The Air Force has a very inspiring motto 'Touch the sky with glory', 'Nabhah sprisham deeptam'. I am sure you will imbibe the spirit of this motto and live upto the expectations the nation has from you all. I wish you an exciting and fulfilling career and a very bright future ahead.

Thank you!

Jai Hind!

Jai Bharat!