

EXTRACT OF RRM SPEECH DURING NAVAL COMMANDERS' CONFERENCE

Raksha Rajya Mantri (RRM) has stressed that Aatmnirbharta in Defence is the top priority of the Government of India under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and this resolve is reflected by the fact that the last 33 warships have been Made in India, while 61 out of 63 warships under construction, are also being built in our shipyards.

Speaking at the Naval Commanders' Conference in New Delhi, Shri Ajay Bhatt applauded Indian Navy, and said, "since beginning, Indian Navy has been the torchbearer of the Government's *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* initiative and it has earmarked more than 70 % of its Modernisation budget in the Current Financial Year for indigenous procurement."

RRM highlighted the strength of indigenous warship building enterprise. "The launch of Vindhyagiri, by the President of India last month, and the launch of Mahendragiri, by the Vice President on the first of this month, underscore the strength of indigenous warship building enterprise," he said.

RRM said that the Indian Navy, as a key instrument of national power, is playing a vital role in the emerging security scenario and poses significant challenges. He emphasized that, as defence today is no longer limited to land, sea or skies but encompasses space, cyber, economic and social space, there is necessity of a 'Whole of Nation approach' to overcome emerging security challenges.

Emphasizing that the prevailing security environment have once again reiterated the need to be strong at sea, RRM Shri Ajay Bhatt exuded confidence that the Indian Navy guarantees the Nation's maritime security.

Underscoring the Prime Minister's Vision of Security and Growth for all in the Region (SAGAR), Raksha Rajya Mantri called upon the Indian Navy to shape up a favourable and positive environment in the maritime domain. "***With increasing dependence on the seas for national development and engagement with the world, the Indian Navy in coordination with other national agencies must continuously strive to protect, promote, preserve, and pursue Indian national interests in the maritime domain,***" said Shri Ajay Bhatt.

Talking about the Agnipath scheme, Shri Ajay Bhatt said, "The successful completion of basic training of the first batch of Agniveers in March this year, including 272 women trainees, is a landmark event in executing the transformational Agnipath scheme on ground." He further said, "Indian Navy's initiative to enhance educational qualification of Agniveers through conclusion of MoUs with leading Universities, to facilitate award of degrees and diplomas, would enable them for a post Navy career, contributing to nation building."