

**ADDRESS BY THE HON'BLE PRESIDENT OF INDIA  
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND  
AT THE VALEDICTORY CEREMONY OF THE 60<sup>TH</sup> COURSE  
OF THE NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE**

It gives me immense pleasure to address you all this morning as part of the valedictory ceremony of the 60<sup>th</sup> NDC course. I would have been delighted to host you at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Unfortunately, I am unable to do so because of the extraordinary situation forced upon us by the Covid-19 pandemic.

This year has been particularly hard for all walks of life as coping with Covid-19 has become the new normal. I have been apprised that the NDC was among the first few institutions to speedily switch from a contact programme to an online mode of imparting training. I must congratulate you on successful completion of the course with no impact on its aims and outcomes.

A few days ago, it was my pleasure to institute 'The President's Chair of Excellence on National Security' at the NDC. It was a befitting gesture to mark the diamond jubilee of the great institution. I hope the Chair will enrich the intellectual and academic standards at India's apex institution of strategic learning.

When it comes to strategic learning, India has a long and proud tradition, beginning with Chanakya, 200 to 300 years Before Common Era. His great treatise, *Arthashastra*, is not only among the earliest works on strategy, but – more importantly – it is unique in looking at the subject in a holistic manner. The great philosopher considers strategic matters as part of a whole range of themes that bear upon the well-being of a nation. Warfare and strategy go hand in hand with diplomacy, governance, justice, economy, organisation of the State, and the overall value system.

Today, we appreciate Chanakya's unique wisdom as scholars around the world realise the significance of expanding the focus and

developing a holistic approach to the matters of national security. I see the NDC as a continuation of the long Indian tradition of comprehensive strategic thinking. This is reflected in its curriculum, beginning with a socio-political study of India and culminating in strategies and structures of national security.

Dear Officers,

The state of the world today poses multiple challenges before every nation. Decision-makers have to be guided by national interests as well as international objectives, both of which should be adaptive and multi-pronged. The policy of expansionism followed by a few nations demands a strategic and matured response globally. It is in this context that the NDC deals with several such challenges and offers its course participants tools to understand the multi-dimensional geostrategic and geopolitical environment for future. The course enables you to build intellectual capital and embrace the knowledge in order to make all your endeavours adaptive to challenges of the future and deal with international complexities.

Over the sixty glorious years, the NDC has lived up to the aims and objectives of its foundation. The most significant contribution it has been making is aligning India's Civil Services to the strategic defence thinking. Senior officers from the Civil Services join this course to improve their understanding on national and international security situation.

The NDC has imparted skills and knowledge to senior officers not only from our Armed Forces and Civil Services, but also those from Friendly Foreign Countries, to help them make informed policy decisions related to their respective national objectives and aims. The wide range of curriculum that this course offers for all participants is clearly designed to impart training and knowledge to aspire for a safer world.

Dear Officers,

But a safer world can be thought of only if we could purge it of terrorism, the most virulent curse on humanity. It has become an issue of international significance with various countries of the world facing its wrath. The recent incidents of killings in European countries are reprehensible beyond words. It brings us to the point where we need to understand that terrorism in any form and manifestation needs to be stamped out through collective efforts of the international community.

Just as Chanakya envisioned, the security paradigm now goes well beyond safeguarding territorial integrity. It includes a variety of dimensions like economy and information technology. Moreover, in these times of the pandemic and climate change, healthcare and natural resources have also emerged as factors of paramount importance. To secure the nation as well as to ensure peace and welfare for its people, decision-makers have to remain alive to the full spectrum of such aspects.

This century has been marked by an increasing complexity of life, which has transformed the nature of competition and conflict. Every emerging situation evolves in many more dimensions than in earlier times. This is where the role of knowledge becomes critical. Knowledge is power, as the adage goes. In the *Hitopadesha*, the eighth century book of instructions in Sanskrit, the same idea is expressed much better:

बुद्धिर्यस्यबलंतस्य: "The one with wisdom holds the real power." It is befitting that this memorable line is the motto of the National Defence College.

Dear Officers,

In your quest for such wisdom, I wish you all success. I am confident that the 60<sup>th</sup> NDC Course will contribute significantly towards enhancing national security, both in India and the countries

represented in the college. I hope you will add to the glory of the NDC, and of your respective countries, while also strengthening the bonds of friendship that you have developed here.

Jai Hind!