

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE ON THE OCCASION OF CEREMONIAL RECEPTION  
OF INSV MHADEI**

Mumbai, Maharashtra: 06-04-2013

1. It is a proud moment for all us. At the outset, I would like to congratulate the Indian Navy and the skipper of Mhadei on successful completion of Sagar Parikrama - II, the Non-stop Solo Circumnavigation of the Globe. To sustain a long voyage of 151 days at sea, solo, non stop unassisted and sailing through some of the most treacherous oceans of the world, is a remarkable feat. This rare achievement – the first by an Indian seafarer – showcases the spirit of determination, resolve and courage of both the individual and the organization he represents. I congratulate and warmly welcome Abhilash Tomy on behalf of people and Government of India.

2. Solo Circum-navigation, apart from being a physically arduous task also requires very high standards of knowledge of navigation meteorology and boat maintenance. The circum-navigator not only gets tossed around by the rough seas but also has to fight solitude and the imponderables of life at Sea, away from civilization, away from fellow humans. Battling wave heights of 9-10 meters and wind speeds in excess of 100 kmph coupled with Antarctic chills can be an extreme test of human endurance. The solitude factor alone is such that being thousands of kms away from the nearest land, there would be very little chance of help or rescue, if something went wrong. To undertake crossing of the three Capes, i.e. Cape Leeuwin, Cape Horn and Cape of Good Hope alone require courage, determination and grit of the highest order. Abhilash, you have achieved all these. I congratulate you.

3. I am sure that this achievement of Lieutenant Commander Abhilash Tomy will continue to be a source of inspiration for future generations of young seafarers. His epic voyage has placed our nation into the ranks of a few select countries whose citizens have been successful and less than 100 individuals in braving such an arduous voyage. I would also like to felicitate parents of Lt Cdr Abhilash Tomy and, the mentor of the project VAdm (Retd) MP Awati. I would also like to congratulate Mr Ratnakar Dandekar who has built this wonderful boat in India.

4. I am told that the expedition has generated enormous media attention and created fervour amongst the youth for seafaring and Oceanic adventures. I am also given to understand that the internet postings of the Skipper on his blog and Facebook pages have been keenly followed by admirers from all age groups.

5. A nation's social and economic well-being is intricately linked to the seas, not only for trade, but also how it faces threats to its security that develop across the seas. Sponsorship of terrorism through non-state actors, and across the seas, is a matter of deep concern to the entire nation. Historically, India has always stood for peace. Our commitment to peaceful co-existence stems not from weakness but is based on a mature understanding that peace alone can help a nation achieve its objectives of social and economic development. Peace can, however, be sought only from a position of strength – strength sufficient to safeguard our territorial sovereignty and maritime interests, both economic and strategic.

6. Our resolve to achieve sustained high growth can be realized only if our maritime frontiers and assets are safe, stable and act as

enablers. The Indian Navy, as the primary element of India's maritime power, has the challenging task of safeguarding the country's maritime interests. Our country's security situation predicates that the Navy plays a leadership role. It is indeed a matter of great pride that the Indian Navy continues to discharge its responsibilities with professional excellence and élan, whilst simultaneously building bridges of friendship and goodwill across the oceans. In this regard, the selfless service, dedication and professionalism of our men and women in white are indeed praiseworthy.

7. I extend my good wishes to all uniformed men, women, their families and civilian personnel of the Indian Navy, and wish them continued success in all endeavours.

Jai Hind.