

**ADDRESS BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA,
SHRI RAM NATH KOVIND
ON THE OCCASION OF PRESENTATION OF PRESIDENT'S
COLOUR TO INDIAN NAVAL AVIATION**

Goa, September 6, 2021

It is a matter of pride for me to stand amid all of you to present President's Colour to Indian Naval Aviation today. It is indeed a momentous event in the history of naval aviation as it completes 68 glorious years in the service of the nation.

I would like to congratulate, all officers and sailors, past and present, for achieving this feat. The President's Colour presented today is the recognition of exceptional service rendered to the Nation, in peace and war. Naval Aviation has an exceptional record of professional excellence and has discharged its responsibilities with honour and distinction. My best wishes to each and every member of the naval aviation fraternity.

Indian Naval Aviation has undertaken a steady journey over the past few decades. It began with the commissioning of the first Indian Naval Air Station, INS Garuda on 11 May 1953. Since then the aviation arm of the Navy has come a long way. Aircraft Carrier INS Vikrant commissioned in 1961 gave power and pride to Indian Navy and played a crucial role during the liberation of Goa. We celebrated "Goa at 60" last year.

Naval Aviation had taken part in the wars of 1962 and 1965. INS Vikrant with its integral aircraft, played a crucial role in the 1971 War which will always remain etched in our memory. I am told that Naval Aviation played its role in the context of the 1999 Kargil conflict also. It has also maintained a vigilant watch in the Indian Ocean Region.

INS Viraat which was inducted in 1980s and the INS Vikramaditya commissioned in 2013 have added more power to our fleets on the

seas. It is a matter of great pride for Indian Navy that the indigenously built aircraft carrier, the new Vikrant has started sea trials. It distinguishes the Indian Navy as being the only Navy in the region and one of the three navies of the world, for maintaining continuous carrier operations for nearly seven decades. It has an outstanding operational record.

The Naval Aviation has contributed through numerous Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief operations during which it has provided relief to fellow citizens like the recently conducted rescue operations off Mumbai during Cyclone Tauktae in May 2021. It has also provided crucial assistance to several neighbouring countries and nations in the Indian Ocean Region.

The Indian Navy has invested significant effort in meeting all regional commitments and furthering our diplomatic engagements with friends and partners in the Indo-Pacific. With missions like Operation 'Samudra Setu' and 'Mission Sagar', the Navy was a key instrument of India's COVID outreach, delivering assistance and support to our maritime neighbours and partners in the Indian Ocean Region. The prompt and effective deployment of the Indian Navy in the time of crisis, has underscored India's vision of being the 'Preferred Security Partner' and 'First Responder' in the Indian Ocean Region.

Besides securing our maritime boundaries, there is a special achievement of the Indian Navy which I would like to highlight. I am told that the Indian Navy has actively taken up indigenisation. This is well reflected in the Navy's current and future acquisition plans, which are powered by indigenisation. In pursuance of the Government of India's vision of 'Atma Nirbhar Bharat', Indian Naval Aviation has also made steady progress in consonance with the Make in India drive. With resounding progress in aviation technology, naval aircraft today, are being installed with modern, state of the art indigenous, weapons, sensors and Data Link suites. The recent inductions of Advanced Light Helicopters as well as Dornier and Chetak aircrafts manufactured

indigenously by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited highlight our march towards 'Atma-nirbharta' in defence sector.

Naval Aviation's impressive flying statistics since its inception are truly reflective of the untiring efforts of a highly motivated team. Naval Aviation has been at the forefront of inducting women. I have been given to understand that of about 150 Air Traffic Control officers in Naval Aviation about 84 i.e. more than 50 per cent are women and out of strength of 400 Observers, 75 are women. I am also told that women pilots have also been inducted in the Naval Aviation. This is a healthy trend and must be encouraged.

On this special occasion, I pay homage to all those from the Naval Aviation who have laid down their lives in the service of the nation. We will always remain indebted to them and their families.

I once again congratulate all veterans and serving Naval Aviators for their untiring service to the nation. I urge all the men and women to continue their selfless and dedicated service. My best wishes to you for success in your future endeavours.

Thank you,

Jai Hind!