

Speech by H.E. Mr. Vinod K Jacob, Ambassador of India to the Kingdom of Bahrain at the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the Kargil Vijay Diwas organized by Embassy of India, Bahrain in Manama on 26 July 2024

I am happy to receive such distinguished members of the Indian community here in my Embassy today for an important and solemn occasion. 25 years ago, the Kargil War unfolded in front of our eyes and played a consequential role in moulding our national character in the face of extreme adversity. At that time, I was in the midst of the selection process for the UPSC over three stages of the prelims, mains and the interview and I distinctly recall how impactful the bravery of our bravehearts was on the national consciousness.

Today, when I look back, and with the benefit of experience of nearly 24 years of diplomacy dealing with China, Pakistan, Iran, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, multilateral diplomacy and economic relations besides the past one year in friendly Bahrain, I am able to discern five important aspects of India's external engagement that have a close and direct connection to our military diplomacy. These seem to me to have evolved into a sort of foundational basis on which the contemporary Indian Ambassador carries out his or her diplomatic responsibilities.

First, traditional diplomacy has been enriched by military diplomacy in dealing with both conventional and non-conventional threats to peace and prosperity. This dimension has particular significance in prevention of conflicts and also in containing conflicts that have broken out. When we look at the institutional cooperation, it is very evident that both the External Affairs and Defence Ministries increasingly complement each other in promoting Indian national interests on the regional and global stage. Both the verticals-diplomacy and defence-collaborate in ensuring strategic communication and reinforce each other.

Second, India's role as "net security provider and first responder" in the Indian Ocean Region is vital. We have been at the forefront of providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief and thereby contributing to regional cooperation. Separately, in the Gulf region, in the wake of October 2023, Indian Navy has contributed significantly through maritime security operations and assistance to merchant and fishing vessels. In the recent past, the Indian Navy has saved almost 110 lives besides freeing merchant ships and other vessels from pirates. In November last year, we also joined as a member of the Manama based Combined Maritime Forces.

Third, the increasing salience of technology in both diplomatic and security initiatives is a trend which has been well received and widely acknowledged and is at the core of our SAGAR doctrine, namely Security and Growth for All in the Region. The various technologies like space, communications, electronics and reconnaissance have served to ensure that India is able to effectively collaborate with other partners in the defence and security spheres in an increasingly inter-connected world.

Fourth, we continue to play a transformational role in UN peacekeeping operations. We have, till date, contributed more than 2,53,000 troops in about 50

UN missions, and 175 of our peacekeepers have made the supreme sacrifice while serving the cause of global peace and security. Indian peacekeepers have served in some of the most physically demanding and harshest environments and in 2007, India became the first country to send an all women contingent to a UN peacekeeping mission. The recent award of UN Gender Advocate of Year to Major Radhika Sen of the Indian Army is reflective of the great work being done by our peacekeepers.

Fifth, I refer to the intangible but highly significant element of our Kargil Veterans and Bravehearts as moulders and influencers of Indian nation building and Indian national character. The stories of bravery have a deep and profound impact on our national psyche. The can-do attitude of our soldiers ensured victory at the icy heights of the Himalayas but also took a big toll on the families of our bravehearts.

Today, I am acutely conscious of the huge responsibility placed on me by my country as a representative of the President of India who is also the Supreme Commander of our Armed Forces. Equally, I am strengthened by the thought that in carrying out this huge responsibility, I stand on the strong shoulders of one of the finest and bravest armed forces in the world today. It is our duty to respect and uphold the values and commitment of our soldiers.

Kargil Vijay Diwas defines Indian nationhood in many ways. It is a reminder of India's resilience in the face of aggression and its commitment to peace and sovereignty. It reinforces the importance of maintaining vigilance and preparedness to defend the country's honor under any circumstances.

Jai Hind.