

**CNS Address on Decommissioning Ceremony of Viraat – 05 March
2017**

1. Admiral Sir Philip Jones, the First Sea Lord and Chief of Naval Staff, Royal Navy, former chiefs of Naval Staff, Admiral Madhvendra Singh, Admiral Arun Prakash and Admiral DK Joshi, VAdm Girish Luthra, FOCINC West, Lt Gen Sarath Chand, Vice Chief of Army Staff, VAdm BK Verma CINCAN, VAdm AR Karve, FOCINC South, Senior officers, distinguished guests, members of the media, ladies and gentlemen.
2. As I stand here today to speak on this momentous occasion, I am sure that, our hearts are filled with mixed emotions of sorrow as well as accomplishment. I say 'sorrow' because we are witnessing the end of an epic journey of a remarkable ship that has added much glory to two very fine navies of the world. And I say 'accomplishment' because; true to our ethos, Viraat, in her long, eventful and splendid inning has always stood ready, put war fighting first and accomplished every mission in true *Viraati* style.
3. Like many of you, who are present here today, I deem it a singular honour to have been part of this extraordinary ship. As the flag bearer for the Indian Navy for three glorious decades, she has epitomised our naval prowess and unambiguously proved the adage engraved on her crest - '*Jalamev Yasya*(JALA / MEV - YASYA), *Balamev Tasya*(BALA / MEV - TASYA)'(He who rules the seas is all powerful).
4. True to her role, she has nurtured and instilled a sense of pride in the officers and sailors who have served onboard over the years. Her influence in nurturing leaders is evident by the number of Commanding officers who have risen to positions, from where they have shaped the course of the Indian Navy.

5. All 22 Commanding Officers of *Viraat* rose to the Flag rank. The ship was a stepping stone for five Chiefs of the Naval Staff, 14 C-IN-Cs and 17 Fleet Commanders. This mighty carrier has produced 20 Vice Admirals and 18 Rear Admirals. A feat such as this of producing 36 flag officers, *not counting the flag officers it has produced for the Royal Navy*, will probably remain unsurpassed.

6. Walking down memory lane, one is reminded of several significant achievements that *Viraat* has accrued in her life time. In her earlier avatar as HMS Hermes, she was the flagship for the British forces during the 1982 Falklands War. In the Indian Navy, *Viraat* led from the front in Operation Jupiter and Parakram amongst many other missions. Naval historians would be hard-pressed to find any other grey-hull that has served with such distinction under two ensigns.

7. I am certain that the First Sea Lord and our naval brethren, who have come all the way from the United Kingdom, would have fond memories of her as *Hermes*, and would echo our sentiments. My congratulations to the First Sea Lord and the British crew for nurturing this ship and for being an important part of her legacy.

8. Upon joining the Indian Navy, *Viraat* very quickly proved to be a versatile asset which could be deployed for power projection as well as diplomatic and combat operations. Op Jupiter was once such occasion where *Viraat* embarked 7 Garhwal Rifles and transformed overnight into a Commando Carrier. This operational association was duly consecrated on 02 Feb 1990 as an affiliation between the Garhwal Regiment and *Viraat*. I am sanguine that both forces have drawn inspiration and strength from this relationship.

9. With her Air Squadrons comprising of the 'White Tigers', 'Harpoons' and 'Angels' ever-eager to launch from her deck, she was the manifestation of India's naval strategy in the region.

10. *Viraat* was designed in the 40's and built in the 50's. At the time of induction in the Indian Navy in 1987, her residual life was assessed to be ten years. Such was the indomitable spirit of the 'grand old lady' that she has been fighting fit for about two decades longer. Through this journey, major combat systems were replaced with modern ones, new equipment were added and an already capable ship was made even more formidable.

11. This achievement in itself is testimony to the men and women who built her and those who helped transform her over the years. True to her motto of '*Jayem sum Yudhispradha* (JAYEM SUM YUDHI / PRADHA)' (*We win over those who dare to fight us*), Team *Viraat* has perpetuated a legacy of success against a wide variety of adverse and unprecedented situations. To all the Commanding Officers and their gallant men, I would like to say, thank you for being the best that you could be!

12. *Viraat* will take her last bow on the maritime stage as the soulful bugle call of the last post is sounded. I am sure that her Commanding Officers, as well as officers and men who sailed her or flew from her deck, will all proudly reflect on the accomplishments of this 'Grand Old lady' for many-many years to come.

13. As the moment draws closer to bid adieu to this grand lady, it remains for me to thank you all for being a part of this historic occasion and acknowledging the pride of place 'Romeo Two Two' occupies in our minds and hearts.

14. Jai Hind!

