

**SPEECH BY THE PRESIDENT OF INDIA, SHRI PRANAB  
MUKHERJEE AT THE PRESIDENT'S STANDARD  
PRESENTATION TO 115 HELICOPTER UNIT AND 26  
SQUADRON**

**Tezpur, Assam: 21-11-2014**

1. It gives me immense pleasure to be here today at Air Force Station Tezpur, one of the premier Air Bases of the Indian Air Force in the Eastern Sector, to award Standards to 115 Helicopter Unit and 26 Squadron. These distinguished flying Units have a glorious past and a rich tradition of professional excellence. Since their inception, they have rendered illustrious service to the Nation and done us proud. Their rich heritage and stellar efforts in the pursuit of excellence have set a benchmark for others to emulate. For their selfless devotion, professionalism and courage in the face of adversity, the Nation honours them today with a deep sense of gratitude and appreciation.

2. Indian Air Force has always been at the forefront in the projection of our Nation's might. Besides its role of safeguarding the sovereignty of our Nation, it has always been a harbinger of humanitarian aid within our boundaries. The relief operations rendered in the disaster hit regions, often in the face of adverse weather and tragedy, bears testimony to the fortitude, professionalism and determination of the men and women in blue. From Kanyakumari to the mighty Himalayas, the resilience and tenacity of the Air Warriors has been a source of tremendous pride for the Nation. The professional excellence, grit and determination exhibited by them over the past few decades is highly laudable. Their excellent performance has been acknowledged both in India and abroad, during their participation in various International Exercises.

3. Today our Nation is on the path of growth in all fields. While the Nation grows and develops in all realms, the subcontinent also faces varied threats especially from non-state actors. To preserve peace and harmony and promote all round development, it is imperative for us to have an effective deterrence and a strong defense. Though as a Nation we are firmly committed to peace, we must be prepared to use our might to safeguard the sovereignty of our Nation, should the need ever arise. We are a Nation which believes in equality in all realms. The men and women who stand before us today epitomize our grit and determination towards this underlying cause. I am immensely proud of our Armed Forces for leading the path in this respect. I also take this opportunity to congratulate all the Air Warriors on parade for their exemplary standard of drill, dress and deportment this morning.

4. 115 Helicopter Unit has had a glorious operational record. It was formed in Chandigarh in April 1967 with Mi-4 Helicopters. This was also one of the first Helicopter Units to be equipped with Jet Engine Chetak Helicopters. During the 1971 Indo-Pak War, the Unit undertook various operations in support of the Army offensive, casualty evacuation and search and rescue operations. The personnel of the Unit have been decorated with several gallantry awards for their courage and valour. Since inception, the Unit has not only undertaken and executed various operational missions but has also actively carried out various rescue missions. The Unit has forever rendered selfless support during natural calamities. In the month of Aug 1975, the Unit was involved in flood relief operations in Bihar and it was during these challenging operations that the National media aptly christened the Unit as “THE HOVERING ANGELS”, a name that the Unit bears proudly till date. Over the years, the Unit has lived up to its adage of “Saving Lives.... Always”. Hence the motto “AAPATSU MITRAM” meaning **“A friend to all those in dire need”** manifestly reflects the Unit’s noble and gallant involvement towards the conduct of operations in the region. The Unit has operated Mi-4, Chetak and Cheetah Helicopters with distinction and accomplishment. I am confident that the “Hovering Angels” will continue to grow from strength to strength in the years to come.

5. 26 Squadron was formed in Adampur in January 1968 and was the first Squadron to be equipped with the indomitable Sukhoi-7 aircraft. The Squadron actively participated in the 1971 Indo-Pak War where it acted as a force multiplier in support of the army offensive. The commendable performances of the personnel has been recognised and appreciated in the form of Gallantry Awards. In 1977, the Squadron was re-equipped with MIG 21BIS aircraft and moved to Pathankot. Since its inception, the Squadron has undertaken significant operational missions, including several missions flown during the Kargil conflict of 1999 and towards guarding the Northern Skies during the long period of activation as a part of Op Parakram. The Squadron has always lived up to its motto of “Yudhyaswa Vigatjwarah”, which when translated reads **“Wage War with all your might”**. I am sure that the Squadron will continue to excel even more, in the times to come.

6. In acknowledgement and recognition of their outstanding performances, I award Standards to 115 Helicopter Unit and 26 Squadron. On this occasion, I take the opportunity to compliment the personnel and families of 115 Helicopter Unit and 26 Squadron, both past and present, for their selfless service and dedication towards the Nation. The Nation is indeed proud of you. I wish you all the very best for a glorious future.

**‘JAI HIND’**