

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa At The 96th Commissioning Parade Of Sri Lanka Military Academy

His Excellency President Gotabaya Rajapaksa addressed the gathering at the 96th Commissioning Parade of the Sri Lanka Military Academy.

December 19, 2021



His Excellency President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

“Discipline of the highest degree is one of the most important aspects in a military officer’s life. Optimism, self-belief, and confidence in yourself and those in your teams will be at the heart of your success,” said President Gotabaya Rajapaksa.

The President made these remarks while participating at the 96th Commissioning Parade of the Sri Lanka Military Academy, Diyatalawa.

“The attention you pay to simple tasks builds discipline, it fosters attention to detail, and it provides a sense of accomplishment, no matter how small, as you start your day. There will be many situations in your life where no matter how capable or skilled you are as an individual, you will not be able to succeed without the support of others,” the President further said.

“Someday, one of you may even become the Commander of the Army and be

responsible for the entire organization and all the people in it. As you start on this journey, you must understand that the soldiers under your command are ordinary people, and not supermen. It is your responsibility to ensure that you get outstanding results from such normal people," President Rajapaksa added.

The President pointed out that setbacks are part of the journey and the leader should be able to face them successfully and make bold decisions.

President Rajapaksa upon arrival, paid floral tribute to the fallen heroes at the Monument of Peace and observed the Commissioning Parade.

A total of 316 officer cadets from Intake 5 passed out.

The group includes 73 students who entered the Sri Lanka Military Academy (SLMA) to pursue Bachelor's Degree in Military Studies, 150 graduates from General Sir John Kotelawala Defence University, 61 volunteer cadet officers, 15 volunteer female cadet officers, six trained cadet officers from Zambia, Maldives and Rwanda and five Sri Lankan cadets trained in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nepal.

President's Award for the First in Order of Merit for Volunteer Lady Officer Cadet Intake 17 was awarded to H.A.T. Prabhashwari by President Rajapaksa while President's Award for the First in Order of Merit for Volunteer Officer Cadet Intake 60 and the Sword of Honour for the Best All-Round Officer Cadet was awarded to A.M.D.T.N. Perera. Meanwhile, the President's Award for the First in Order of Merit for Regular Officer Cadet Intake 89B was awarded to R.T.L.A. Silva, the Sword of Honour for the Best All-Round Officer Cadet of Regular Officer Cadet Intake 89B to H.E.A. Ranjula and the President's Award for the First in Order of Merit for Regular Officer Cadet Intake 90 and the Sword of Honour for the Best All-Round Officer Cadet of Regular Officer to T.R.C.D. Pathinayake. The President's Award for the First in Order of Merit and the Sword of Honour for the Best All-Round Officer Cadet for the Regular Officer Cadet Intake 89 was awarded to D.M.M. Rukshan while the Staff of Honour for Best Foreign Cadet Officer was awarded to A. Adam of Maldives.

The President planted a sapling to mark his participation and appeared in several group photos.

Principal Advisor to the President Lalith Weeratunga, Defence Secretary General Kamal Gunaratne, Chief of Defence Staff and Commander of the Army General Shavendra Silva and other senior Army officers were also present.

President's Speech – Passing Out Parade at Diyatalawa

I am delighted to address you this morning at the 96th Commissioning Parade of the Sri Lanka Military Academy.

I congratulate the Officer Cadets being Commissioned today and commend the Commandant and Staff of the Academy, the Parade Commander, the Academy Sergeant Major, the Drill Instructors, and the Officer Cadets for the high standards demonstrated.

I am especially pleased to note that six Officer Cadets from the Republic of Maldives, Republic of Rwanda and Republic of Zambia are standing on parade today, together with five Sri Lankan Officer Cadets who received their training in India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal.

Joining a nation's military as a Commissioned Officer is a great honour for any young person.

I take this opportunity to thank the parents and families of the Officer Cadets for having raised such patriotic young men and women.

I am sure you are justly proud about their having reached this important juncture in their lives, and I am confident they will make you even prouder through their careers in the Armed Forces in future.

I stand here before you this morning as the 7th Executive President of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka and as your Commander in Chief.

Nearly fifty years ago, however, I stood where all of you stand now, as a young Officer Cadet in the Commissioning Parade of the Army's Intake 4.

I can say without any hesitation that the training I received, the experience I gained, and the many qualities inculcated in me throughout my military career were essential factors in my election to the highest office in the land.

I, therefore, want to share with you some salient thoughts based on the experience I gained through my career that will stand you in good stead for yours.

During your training, you will have understood that discipline of the highest degree is one of the most important aspects in a military officer's life.

From the first day you entered this institution, making your bed as you wake up every morning, ensuring your clothes are ironed, your boots are polished, and that every aspect of your dress and appearance is immaculate was a key part of your training, alongside the physical training exercises and drills that became part of your routine.

There is a reason for this.

The attention you pay to these simple tasks builds discipline, it fosters attention to detail, and it provides a sense of accomplishment, no matter how small, as you start your day.

These are all essential qualities that will help you later in life, no matter where your career takes you.

As a young officer in the Signals Corps, I used to observe how the Adjutant would carefully balance the accounts of the PRI fund each evening, counting even small amounts of money several times, and making sure it was securely locked in the safe before retiring.

He paid such careful attention to this simple task because discipline and integrity are so integral to military life. This was an invaluable lesson for me as a young officer.

During your time at the Academy, most of the training exercises you engaged in took place alongside your fellow Officer Cadets.

Fostering this ability to work well together with others is one of the hallmarks of the military.

There will be many situations in your life where no matter how capable or skilled you are as an individual, you will not be able to succeed without the support of others.

Teamwork is therefore an essential life skill that needs to be cultivated, and your career in the military will provide you ample opportunities to do so.

Particularly as officers, you must seek to develop your leadership skills further.

When you are assigned to a unit, as you shortly will be, you will have to take

responsibility for all your subordinates.

As you rise through the ranks, your responsibilities will only increase.

Someday, one of you may even become the Commander of the Army and be responsible for the entire organization and all the people in it.

As you start on this journey, you must understand that the soldiers under your command are ordinary people, and not supermen.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you get outstanding results from such normal people.

To do this, you must ensure that your unit is well trained, healthy, and fit for duty, and that their welfare is looked after and that their morale is high.

You must live alongside them, engaging in physical training, drills, weapons handling, and other exercises, and ensuring that their meals and accommodation is up to standard.

As their leader, you will need to know a great deal about the people under you—their names, where they are from, what their families are like, and what their characteristics are.

You must have a thorough knowledge of their potential so that you can determine in what capacities they can be deployed.

It is only then that you will be able to get the best out of them and show your own capabilities as a leader.

Learning how to motivate the people under your command is essential.

Motivation helps people stay focused on their missions despite the setbacks, obstacles and difficulties that arise from time to time.

In the early 1980s, my Commanding Officer in the Gajaba Regiment was General Wijaya Wimalaratna.

When the Gajaba Regiment took over the Northern Province in 1984 after the war had broken out in earnest, Gen. Wimalaratna told us that we must remain there

until the war was fought to a conclusion, instead of being relieved at the end of our usual 6-month rotation.

Because of the way he motivated us, we were willing to stay there without being relieved for longer than any other Battalion.

Throughout the war, which ended in 2009, the members of our military made countless sacrifices and underwent unspeakable hardships.

They did so because they were all deeply committed to the mission at hand, which was to secure Sri Lanka’s sovereignty in the face of separatism.

This shared sense of mission was clearly communicated not only to the military but to the entire nation by then President Mahinda Rajapaksa, and every senior official involved in the war effort including myself as Defence Secretary.

It is this shared sense of mission that ultimately enabled peace to return to Sri Lanka after a lapse of thirty years.

The security and stability that Sri Lanka enjoys today must never be taken for granted.

As young officers, all of you have a responsibility to ensure that you work towards upholding national security by fulfilling the duties you are assigned to the best of your abilities.

Even though the environment you inherit is a much more secure and stable one than we experienced, you will nevertheless come across situations in which you are called upon to make critical decisions that will have significant consequences during your time in the military.

In those instances, you must have the courage to trust your training, your instincts, and your experience, and make those decisions without fear. Occasionally you will make mistakes, even costly ones.

Failures are a part of life, and you must not shy away from them.

They are an invaluable part of your learning process, and you will gain a great deal from them.

However, if you fear failure so much that you do not push yourself to take those bold decisions, you will fail anyway by being indecisive.

Positive thinking, therefore, is crucially important.

Optimism, self-belief, and confidence in yourself
and those in your teams will be at the heart of your success.

As you step out today as the newest Commissioned Officers in the prestigious Sri Lanka Army, I hope you will take every opportunity to build on the training you have received and to keep improving yourselves as you rise in your careers.

In concluding, I take this opportunity to wish you every future success.

Thank you.



President Gotabaya Rajapaksa being welcomed by Chief of Defence Staff and Army Commander General Shavendra Silva



Ioma Rajapaksa, First Lady of Sri Lanka being welcomed by Sujeewa Nelson, President of Army Seva Vanitha Unit



President Rajapaksa paid floral tribute to the fallen heroes at the Monument of Peace.



The Commissioning Parade displays a dignified moment of supreme pride and patriotism.



The President observing the Commissioning Parade.



A proud moment – President Gotabaya Rajapaksa at the event while Chief of Defence Staff and Army Commander General Shavendra Silva looks on.