

‘Land or sea, India can defend itself’

MODI @ RED FORT Our country is capable and strong enough to overcome those who try to act against it, says PM

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NEWDELHI: Addressing the nation on Independence Day on Tuesday, Prime Minister Modi said India can defend itself from anyone who seeks “to act against our country”.

“India’s security is the top priority of our government. We are capable to thwart any challenge,” Modi said against the backdrop of a border dispute with China in Doklam and strained ties with Pakistan over cross-border terrorism.

Speaking from the ramparts of the Red Fort, the Prime Minister assured the people of the country that India was equipped to safeguard itself on different spheres.

“Be it the sea or the borders, cyber or space -- in all spheres, India is capable and we are strong enough to overcome those who try to act against our country,” he said.

The PM also called for a “new India” by 2022, which he said would be free from the clutches of casteism, communalism, terrorism and corruption. “I Invoke Team India to run for a new India by 2022. By then the poor shall have concrete houses, the farmer shall double his income, youths and women shall get ample opportunities. There should be an India free of casteism, terrorism, corruption, nepotism, a clean India”, Modi said.

Modi’s this year’s I-Day speech did not feature foreign policy imperative or posturing which was in contrast to the address he delivered last year.

In his 2016 Independence Day speech, Modi had seemed to signal a key shift in foreign policy and chose to counter Pakistan by raising human rights issues in Balochistan, Pakistan-occupied Kashmir and Gilgit-Baltistan.

This year, however, Modi chose to highlight the sacrifice made by defence personnel

“Our army, every personnel in uniform has shown their capability whenever there was a difficult situation. Our heroes never shied away from sacrifices,” Modi said.



■ Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation during Independence Day celebrations at the Red Fort in New Delhi on Tuesday. In a departure from tradition, the General Officer Commanding of Delhi Area was not seen standing behind Modi when he delivered his I-Day speech. Army officers were surprised over Lieutenant General Manoj Mukund Naravane not being present on the dais, although he performed his ceremonial duties. Army sources said the three-star officer was not on the dais as protocol was revised. RAJ K RAJ/HT PHOTO

MYTHOLOGICAL MARK

From Lord Ram to Arjuna and Krishna, many Indian mythological heroes found a place in Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Independence Day speech.

Even as he began to speak, Prime Minister Modi noticed children dressed like Bal Gopal (young Krishna) sitting in the audience. He took the opportunity to draw a parallel between Krishna and Mahatma Gandhi.

“From that Mohan with the Sudarshan chakra to the other Mohan (Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi) with the charkha — everybody has been a part of our culture,” he said.

The Prime Minister cited the advice Arjuna took from Lord Krishna before the Kurukshetra battle to make people pledge to build a new India by 2022 — the country’s 75th year of Independence. “Krishna told Arjun that nothing can stop him if his faith is strong. Similarly, nothing can stop the people of this country if their faith is strong,” he said.