

India is fast emerging as global defence player, says PM



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with security personnel in Lepcha, Himachal Pradesh, on Sunday

PHOTO: PTI

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Sunday that India is fast emerging as a big global player in the defence sector and the capabilities of its security forces are constantly rising.

“There was a time when we were dependent on others for small things but now, we are also fulfilling the needs of our friends and allies,” Modi said at Lepcha in Himachal Pradesh, where he flew to spend his Diwali with soldiers.

Security forces have a big role in maintaining peace and keeping India’s borders safe at a time of rising global expectations from the country. Global circumstances are such that the expectations from India are also constantly rising, he said.

Keeping with his annual practice of spending time with personnel of the armed forces on Diwali, Modi also said: “At such an important time, it is necessary that India’s borders are protected and there is an environment of peace in the country, and you have a big role in this,” Modi, dressed in Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) fatigues, said.

“India is protected till the time my bravehearts are standing on the borders,

unflinching as the Himalayas,” the Prime Minister said. He added that after independence, “these bravehearts (Army personnel) fought so many wars and won the country’s heart...Our jawans have snatched victory in the face of challenges”.

“It is said that ‘parv’ is where the ‘parivaar’ is. On festivals, being away from the family and deployed on the borders exemplifies the commitment to duty. The country is indebted to you,” Modi told soldiers.

“Therefore, on Diwali, one ‘diya’ is for your safety, and in every prayer, people wish for your safety,” Modi said, noting that for 30-35 years he has been travelling to border areas on Diwali to celebrate the festival with soldiers. Modi noted that he has been doing it since long before he was either Prime Minister or chief minister.

India’s soldiers have always walked ahead, risking their lives and have always proven that they are the “strongest wall” at the borders, he added.

“For me, a place where our security forces are deployed is no less than a temple,” Modi said.

The Prime Minister also hailed the role played by the armed forces in evacuations in earthquake-hit areas and during other calamities.