

Embassy of India

Yerevan

Commencement Speech at the Leadership School Graduation,

Armenia

[Yerevan, 30 May 2025]

- My colleagues from the Diplomatic Corps
- Mr. Samvel Movsisyan, Founder, Leadership School of Armenia,
- Students of Leadership School,
- Dear Parents and Friends,

Namaskar! Bari yereko! A very good evening to all! I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks to Mr. Samvel Movsisyan for giving me this opportunity to deliver the Commencement Speech at your graduation ceremony today. It is also a very special occasion for the Leadership School which celebrates the completion of 15 years as an institution. What a milestone indeed! Shnoravor! Heartiest congratulations to Samvel jan, to all the graduates of this institution and to everyone associated with the Leadership School. I also laud the vision that inspired Samvel jan to start an institution of this kind filling a void that existed earlier. You have opened the doors to successive generations of Armenian youth, something that you could not benefit from when you started out in your career.

2. I was privileged to deliver the first class of this batch on 17 September 2024. It is so heartening to see your growth during these intervening months. Today is the end of one journey and the beginning of another beautiful and bright dawn leading to a lifetime of learning and achieving. During my interactions with you all on

past occasions, I have spoken about my notions of leadership based on my life experiences and the leaders who I have encountered and who I look up to.

3. Based on my 32-year-old career so far, in my opinion, leadership is not something static. In fact, we are all learning all the time, course correcting if required as we go along. Leadership is often misunderstood as a position or a title. But in reality, it is an attitude, a commitment, and a way of being. Not every boss is a leader. It is the team members who determine if their boss is truly their leader. Here, I would like to quote Mahatma Gandhi who said, *"The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others."* That perhaps is the essence of leadership - not command, but service; not authority, but responsibility. My country India, with its ancient wisdom and modern aspirations, has long recognized the power of values-based leadership. Our Prime Minister, Mr. Narendra Modi, embodies this par excellence. He is someone who works the hardest, who thinks constantly about the last person in the line, who inspires his compatriots to rise and take our country towards true development where the "Ease of Living" is as important as the "Ease of Doing Business". He is someone who truly leads from the front. He has truly recognized "Nari Shakti" or power of women and we are seeing before us the transformation from women participation in the workforce to women-led development with not just political leaders across the vast democratic spectrum, Ambassadors and diplomats but also fighter and commercial pilots (the highest number in the world), naval officers serving in submarines to missile engineers, nuclear scientists, commandos and Border Security soldiers securing our borders and engaged in combat duty.

4. Friends, dear students, in today's interconnected world, leadership is no longer defined by borders. We face global challenges – terrorism, climate change, inequality, digital divide, disruption, trade wars - which all require global leaders. As leadership graduates stepping into this world, you are not just citizens of Armenia but citizens of humanity.

5. I am not aware which is your chosen field but regardless, I think that true leadership will demand three things from you which I have mentioned earlier but will reiterate today:

- i) **Vision with empathy** – The ability to see far ahead, but never lose sight of the people walking beside you. As a leader, you will have to have your ear to the ground. Your team members can give their best only when their requirements are met and they feel happy to work.
- ii) **Integrity in adversity** – When the easy path tempts you, and the hard path tests you, I think you should let your conscience be your compass.
- iii) **The courage to act** – You have to lead from the front. As Michael Jackson said in his famous song, “Man in the Mirror”, *“If you wanna make the world a better place, take a look at yourself, and make a change.”*

6. Dear students, the world does not need more followers of trends. It needs creators of hope. Leaders like you, who are willing to stand up when it matters, speak out when it counts, and lift others as you rise. As an Indian diplomat, I have seen young leaders across the globe shaping policy, leading innovation, building bridges

across cultures. I urge you to carry with you not just the knowledge that you have gained, but the values you cherish. Let your leadership be inclusive, compassionate, and courageous.

7. I would like to conclude with a blessing from the Rigveda, the earliest sacred book of India dating back to 1500 to 1000 BC:

"Let us walk together, speak together, and let our minds be united."

8. Finally, heartiest congratulations to all of you and your families! Quoting from the Star Wars – *"May the Force be with you, always!"*

Thank you! Shat shnorakalem! Namaskar!

30 May 2025