

FROM BATTLEFIELD ★ TO ★ BOARDROOM

New ESCI Director Col HS Grewal charts a **Future Ready** Vision for Engineering Education

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ESCI set for a New Era under Colonel HS Grewal's LEADERSHIP

MAHESH AVADHUTHA & JANGA REDDY PISATI | HYDERABAD |

After spending more than three and half decades serving the nation in uniform, Colonel Harpal Singh Grewal (HS Grewal) has embarked on a new mission. Having taken charge as Director of the Engineering Staff College of India (ESCI) on July 1, the decorated Indian Army veteran says his goal is to transform the institution into a vibrant hub of technology, innovation, industry collaboration, and skill development that prepares professionals for the rapidly evolving world.

In an exclusive interview with Hyderabad Headlines, Colonel Grewal spoke about his remarkable journey from the Indian Army's Corps of Signals to leading one of India's premier engineering education institutions. He shared insights into his family background, military career, leadership philosophy, and the roadmap he has envisioned for ESCI.

Raised in a family that valued education and public service, Colonel Grewal credits much of his discipline and work ethic to his upbringing. His father served as a civil engineer and retired as a Superintendent Engineer with the Punjab Government. Inspired by a strong sense of national service, Grewal joined the Indian Army and was commissioned into the Corps of Signals on June 11, 1988.

His passion for technology went hand in hand with his military career. While serving in the Army, he pursued higher education, earning a BTech in Electronics and Communication Engineering from Jawaharlal Nehru University between 1992 and 1995. He later completed an MTech in Communication System Technologies from IIT Roorkee during 2001 and 2003, strengthening his expertise in advanced military communications and electronic systems.

Looking back at near-

ly four decades of service, Colonel Grewal described a career shaped by technology, operational excellence, and leadership. His assignments took him across some of the country's most challenging regions, including Jammu and Kashmir, the Northeast, Pune, Kolkata, and Hyderabad, where he worked extensively in military communications, electronic warfare, and intelligence operations.

He explained that his responsibilities often involved intercepting enemy communications, locating terrorists through triangulation techniques, and providing critical intelligence for counter terrorism operations. The intelligence generated by his teams, he said, contributed to numerous successful operations carried out by security forces.

His distinguished service earned him several prestigious recognitions, including five Army Commander's Commendation Cards, the Chief of the Army Staff Commendation, and the India Achievers Award. Throughout his military career, Colonel Grewal held several important leadership positions, including Joint Director in the Project Management Organization (PMO Suraj), Director Communications in various Commands, Director Information Systems, Director of Discipline and Vigilance, Group Commander of the National Cadet Corps, and Director Land.

His tenure was marked by several landmark achievements. He played a key role in procuring sophisticated electronic warfare systems from France and Israel, supervised the laying of nearly 20,000 kilometres of optical fibre network covering various states for the Indian Army, led major communication and information technology projects, and coordinated defence land required for several public infrastructure initiatives in Hyderabad, including flyovers, foot over bridges, and parking facilities.

Speaking about his family, Colonel Grewal said he has always enjoyed strong support from his wife and children throughout his demanding career. His son is an engineer and MBA graduate who has estab-

lished a SEBI registered investment advisory firm, while his daughter, an MBA graduate from IIM Indore, is pursuing her professional career in Hyderabad.

Colonel Grewal retired from the Indian Army in November 2024 after about 36 and a half years of distinguished service. Retirement, however, was only the beginning of another professional chapter. He joined Lloyds Bank UK's Technology Centre in India as Senior Manager for Risk and Head of Physical Security, where he worked from March 2025 to May 2026 before accepting the opportunity to head ESCI.

Calling his appointment to ESCI both an honour and a responsibility, Colonel Grewal said the institution possesses a rich legacy that offers a strong foundation for future growth. Established in 1981 as an autonomous organ of The Institution of Engineers (India), the Engineering Staff College of India has earned recognition as one of the country's leading centres for professional education, training, consultancy, and capacity building in engineering, technology, and techno management.

Spread across nearly 60 acres in Hyderabad's Gachibowli, ESCI has spent more than four decades developing technical talent and supporting government organisations, industries, and professionals. Every year, the institution trains nearly 8,000 professionals through more than 400 specialised programmes covering engineering, technology, management, sustainability, infrastructure, and emerging sectors.

According to Colonel Grewal, the institution's future lies in adapting quickly to technological transformation while remaining closely aligned with industry requirements. He said his immediate priorities include modernising academic programmes, strengthening partnerships with industries and government agencies, improving campus infrastructure, expanding research and innovation initiatives, and introducing new technology driven courses that reflect evolving market needs.

He believes institutions today

must prepare professionals not only with technical knowledge but also with leadership abilities, practical exposure, and multidisciplinary skills required in an increasingly digital economy.

Colonel Grewal, who has presented research papers on Software Defined Radios, Electromagnetic Interference, Electromagnetic Compatibility, and Next Generation Networks at several national and international forums, feels that lifelong learning has become essential for every engineering professional.

Inviting industries and institutions to collaborate with ESCI, he said the college aims to become a preferred destination for professional learning,



innovation, and skill development.

"We invite organisations, professionals, and stakeholders to be part of ESCI's journey of continuous learning and excellence. Through our comprehensive training programmes, we aim to enhance professional capabilities, foster innovation, and build a future ready workforce equipped to address emerging challenges in engineering, technology, and management," Colonel Grewal said.

For Hyderabad and the engineering fraternity, the appointment of Colonel HS Grewal marks the beginning of a new chapter at ESCI, one that seeks to blend the discipline of the armed forces, the precision of technology, and the demands of modern industry to create an institution ready to shape the engineers and leaders of tomorrow.

Barely a month after assuming charge as Director of the Engineering Staff College of India (ESCI), Colonel Harpal Singh Grewal has outlined an ambitious roadmap to transform the institution into a nationally recognized centre of excellence in technology, innovation, research, and industry oriented education. During the exclusive interview with Hyderabad Headlines, the decorated Indian Army veteran offered a glimpse into the sweeping initiatives already underway and his long term vision for the 45 year old institution, which has trained engineering professionals for over four decades.

Calling ESCI a "national knowledge partner," Colonel Grewal said the institution must evolve in line with rapidly changing technologies while producing professionals equipped with practical skills and industry exposure. His vision is to position ESCI as the country's leading destination for engineering education, professional training, technical consultancy, research, innovation, and knowledge sharing.

One of his key priorities is introducing programmes in emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, Machine Learning, Robotics, Electric Vehicles, Smart Metering, Geographic Information Systems, sustainability, Cyber Security, Data Analytics, and Industry 4.0. Alongside conventional management programmes, ESCI plans to expand its portfolio with specialized professional courses that directly address industry requirements.

Colonel Grewal revealed that AICTE has already approved six undergraduate programmes, including BTech courses in Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning, Robotics, Electronics and Electrical Engineering, along with Bachelor of Computer Applications. Subject to approval from the Board of Management, these programmes are expected to commence from the next academic year with an intake of 240 students.

The institution is simultaneously pursuing Deemed to be University status, a proposal currently under consideration by the Telangana Government. According to Colonel Grewal, achieving this milestone will significantly strengthen ESCI's academic, research, and institutional capabilities while enabling it to expand into new areas of higher education.

spirit of service.

Despite an illustrious career spanning the armed forces, the corporate world, and now academia, Colonel Grewal believes in maintaining a healthy work life balance. Away from professional responsibilities, he enjoys pursuing a range of interests that keep him physically active and intellectually engaged.

An avid golfer, he admits to constantly chasing the elusive "perfect swing," viewing the sport as a lesson in patience, precision, and perseverance. He is equally passionate about live theatre, appreciating the creativity and storytelling that the performing arts bring to life.

Travel is another enduring passion. Whether exploring different countries, experiencing diverse cultures, or discovering new destinations, Colonel Grewal sees every journey as an opportunity to learn, broaden perspectives, and draw inspiration from people and places around the world.

For Colonel Grewal, success is measured not only by professional achievements but also by the positive impact one leaves on society. It is this blend of military discipline, social commitment, and lifelong curiosity that continues to define his leadership both inside and outside the workplace.

Beyond the Uniform: The Human Side of Col. HS Grewal

