IMHF

INDIAN MILITARY HERITAGE FESTIVAL

4TH EDITION 2026

(Estd.1870)

CENTRE FOR MILITARY HISTORY AND CONFLICT STUDIES (CMHCS)

30 - 31 OCTOBER, 2026

Brochure



UNITED SERVICE INSTITUTION OF INDIA (USI)

About

INDIAN MILITARY HERITAGE FESTIVAL 2026

CONVERSE, CONNECT & CELEBRATE !

The fourth edition of IMHF, on 30-31 October 2026, returns for two days where military memories of the past meet present progress and future prospects. Organised by the USI's Centre for Military History and Conflict Studies, it creates a shared space for exhibitions, book releases, cultural engagements and conversations with voices from across the military and strategic community. India's military journey spans centuries, shaped by warriors and warships, regiments and revolutions, battles and breakthroughs. It reflects courage, resilience and adaptation, while offering insight into the evolution, ethos and enduring experiences that have shaped the Armed Forces. In keeping with the USI's founding purpose of promoting knowledge in the art, science and literature of national security, with particular focus on the Defence Services, the flagship event takes scholarship beyond specialist circles and into the public domain through dialogue, debate and discovery. The Festival seeks to remember, research, reconnect and offers a common forum for the civil-military worlds, connecting serving and retired personnel, war veterans, historians, authors, academicians, policymakers, diplomats, strategic thinkers, industry representatives, students, cadets and the public. It's purpose is to inspire greater interest in India's military legacy, preserve the memory of service and sacrifice, encourage informed engagement in defence and strategic studies, and draw meaningful lessons from our past.

At the heart of this year's Festival is a tri-service exhibition, offering a glimpse into the distinct worlds of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force. The Indian Army's story will include a special showcase on the Garhwal Rifles, presenting its journey, traditions, campaigns and continuing service, while celebrating the spirit of its Gallant Bhullas. Alongside the Infantry Regiment's section, the exhibition and sessions will turn to the maritime and aerial dimensions, presenting the three-services through one integrated narrative. Across these two days, India's role in the Second World War will also be revisited, where Indian soldiers, sailors and airmen served in the theatres far beyond the subcontinent. From wartime service to independence and the making of the modern Armed Forces, their experiences offer a window into a period of profound military and political change. The programme follows these shifts through changing strategies, advancing technology, military cooperation and new arenas of conflict. Panel discussions, special sessions, fireside chats, and band performances will open further windows into history, heritage, heroes, memoirs, military medicine, women in uniform, indigenous innovation, jointmanship and the human experiences beyond the battlefield. IMHF 2026 is much more than a remembrance of bravery and battles. It takes history beyond the archives and into public conversation, making India's military heritage not just a record of what it was, but a living inheritance that continues to shape what lies ahead.

IMHF INDIAN MILITARY HERITAGE FESTIVAL
4TH EDITION 2026

Programme

DAY 1 - 30th OCTOBER, 2026

(Estd.1870)

S No	TIME (hrs)	AUDITORIUM	SEMINAR ROOM - 1
1.1	0900-0940	**REGISTRATION**	
1.2	0945-0955	• 0945 hrs: Arrival of Hon'ble Governor of Bihar, Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM & Bar (Retd) (Chief Guest) • 0946 hrs: Exhibition Inauguration by Chief Guest	
1.3	1000-1030	**INAUGURAL SESSION** • 1000 hrs: Arrival of the Hon'ble Governor on Stage • 1000-1005 hrs: National Song & National Anthem • 1005-1010 hrs: Welcome Address by V Adm Sanjay Jasjit Singh, SYSM, PVSM, AVSM, NM, PhD (Retd), DG, USI • 1010-1030 hrs: Special Address by Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM & Bar (Retd), Hon'ble Governor of Bihar	
1.4	1035-1135	**SPECIAL SESSION: MILITARY HISTORY OF GARHWAL RIFLES** • Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM & Bar (Retd), Hon'ble Governor of Bihar • Gen N S Raja Subramani, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, Chief of the Defence Staff • Lt Gen Dinesh Rana, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, SM, PhD; Colonel of the Regiment Garhwal Rifles • **Moderator:** Maj Gen Gajinder Singh Chandel, AVSM, PhD (Retd) 1125-1130 hrs: Felicitation of Speakers by DG & Hon'ble Governor Group Photo 1130-1135 hrs: National Song & National Anthem	
1.5	1135-1155	**TEA BREAK**	
1.6	1200-1245	**GARHWAL RIFLES - ROLE & CONTRIBUTIONS** • Lt Gen Mohan Bhandari, PVSM, AVSM*, PhD (Retd) • Maj Gen Arjun Muthanna, SM (Retd) - *The Garhwalis in Op Pawan (Sri Lanka) IPKF* (Sabre and Quill, 2025) • Mr Devesh Joshi - *Garhwal Aur Pratham Vishwayudh*, (Winsar Publishing Co., 2024) • **Moderator:** Col Sunil Kotnala (Retd)	**SAPPERS: SIEGES AND FRONTLINES ACROSS CENTURIES OF COMBAT** • Lt Gen Vikas Rohella, AVSM, SM** (E-in-C) • Maj Gen Ajay Kumar Chaturvedi, AVSM, VSM (Retd) • Col Ashwin Baindur (Retd) • Col Christopher John Rego (Retd) • **Moderator:** Maj Gen Pawan Anand, AVSM, PhD (Retd)

1.7	**1250-1335**	**OP SAFED SAGAR** • Air Chief Marshal B S Dhanoa, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, VM (Retd) • Ms Alka Ahuja • Mr Kushal Srivastava • Ms Antara Srivastava • **Moderator:** Sqn Ldr Rana T S Chhina, MBE (Retd), Director, CMHCS	**RE-EXAMINING INDIA'S MILITARY HISTORY: WARS OF THE INDIAN ARMY IN RETROSPECT 1947–1999** • Col Mandeep Singh (Retd) - *The Indian Army at War 1947–99* (Osprey Publications, 2025) • Lt Col Kulvinder Singh (Retd) - *Guns of Longewala: The Untold Story of Indo-Pak War of 1971* (Sabre and Quill, 2023) • **Moderator:** Maj Gen Jagatbir Singh, VSM (Retd)
1.8	**1335-1430**	**LUNCH BREAK**	
1.9	**1435-1525**	**WAR MEMOIRS & MEMORIES** • Mr Vishal Batra - *Yeh Dil Maange More: Remembering Captain Vikram Batra, My Brother* (Penguin Veer, 2026) • Col Kaushal Kashyap, SC - *Only Fools Fight Fair* (Monks & Warriors, 2026) • **Moderator:** Mr Sandeep Unnithan	**SHARED LEGACIES: THE BRITISH INDIAN MILITARY HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP** • Dr Tejpal Ralmill (Community Historian) • Dr Peter Johnston (IWM) • Dr George Hay (CWGC) • Ms Jasmin Kaur Basra (University of Greenwich) • **Moderator:** Prof Gavin Rand (University of Greenwich)
1.10	**1530-1630**	**THE SILENT SENTINELS: LOVE, LOSS AND RESILIENCE BEYOND THE UNIFORM** • Ms Ambreen Zaidi - *The Silent Warrior: Damayanti V. Tambay - Arjun Awardee...* (Prabhat Prakashan, 2025) • Ms Meghna Girish - *Finding New Meaning: A Mother's Journey After an Unspeakable Loss* (Sabre and Quill, 2025) • Ms Geetika Lidder - *I Am a Soldier's Wife: The Life and Love of Toni Lidder* (Roli Books, 2025) • **Moderator:** Ms Aditi Prasad (Times Now)	**DOCTORS AT WAR: TESTIMONY, DUTY, AND THE ETHICS OF MILITARY MEDICINE** • Lt Gen Balakrishnan Jayan 1. *My Pak Diary: 16 April -16 August 2025* (Op Sindoor) (Sabre and Quill, 2025). 2. *Commandant's Diary: Care During COVID Pandemic - A Military Dental Hospital* (Sabre and Quill, 2024). • Lt Col Arup Ratan Basu, YSM (Retd). *The Kargil War Surgeon's Testimony* (Bloomsbury India, 2025). • **Moderator:** Surg V Adm Arti Sarin, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)
1.11	**1635-1655**	**TEA BREAK**	
1.12	**1700-1730**	**INDIA AND WORLD WAR II: RESHAPING OF THE WORLD ORDER** A Talk by Shri M J Akbar, Former Minister of State for External Affairs	
1.13	**1735-1815**	• 1735-1740 hrs: Hon'ble Governor of Bihar Arrives: National Song & National Anthem • 1740-1805 hrs: **FIRESIDE CHAT: THE INDIAN ARMY AND NATION-BUILDING: LEGACY, VALUES AND CONTINUITY** Lt Gen Sandeep Jain, AVSM, SM, Vice Chief of the Army Staff in conversation with Lt Gen Rakesh Kapoor, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) 1805-1810 hrs: Felicitation of Speakers by Hon'ble Governor & Group Photo **1810-1815 hrs: National Song & National Anthem**	

IMHF INDIAN MILITARY HERITAGE FESTIVAL
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Programme

DAY 2 - 31st OCTOBER, 2026

S No	TIME (hrs)	AUDITORIUM	SEMINAR ROOM - 1
2.1	0915 - 0940	**REGISTRATION**	
2.2	0945-1030	**FUTURE READY NAVY** • 0945-0950 hrs: Welcome Address by DG USI • 0950-1010 hrs: Address by Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, PhD, the Chief of the Naval Staff • **Book Release:** 1010-1015 hrs: Capt (IN) N S Mohan Ram, VSM (Retd) - *A Builder's Navy: The Long Road to Self-sufficiency in Warship Design* (Sabre & Quill, 2026) 1015-1020 hrs: Cmde Srikant B Kesnur, VSM, PhD (Retd) - *The War in the Indian Ocean* (Sabre and Quill, 2026) 1020-1025 hrs: Cmde Pramod R Kulkarni, PhD (Retd) - *Warship Design and its Management: A Systems Engineering Perspective* (Routledge, 2026) • Felicitation of CNS by DG	
2.3	1035-1050	**TEA BREAK**	
2.4	1055-1210	**INDIAN NAVY'S INDIGENISATION JOURNEY - PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE** • V Adm B Sivakumar, AVSM, VSM, Chief of Materiel • R Adm Sujit Baxi, DG, Warship Design Bureau • Capt (IN) N S Mohan Ram, VSM (Retd) • Cmde Arun P Golaya, VSM, PhD (Retd) • Cmde Pramod R Kulkarni, PhD (Retd) • **Moderator:** Cmde Srikant B Kesnur, VSM, PhD (Retd)	
2.5	1215-1300	**1946 - 1971: UPRISING TO RISEN** • V Adm Anup Singh, PVSM, AVSM, NM (Retd) • Cdr Vipin Sharma (Retd) • Mr Swaroop Anand • Mr Sandeep Unnithan • **Moderator:** Cmde Srikant B Kesnur, VSM, PhD (Retd)	**PORTS, POWER, AND THE LONG HISTORY OF INDIAN MARITIME AMBITION** • Cmde Abhay Singh (Retd) - *The Making of India's Seapower* • Lt Cdr Anupama Thapliyal - *Anchored in Legacy, Steered by Innovation: 75 Glorious Years of the Indian Navy* (Routledge, 2026) • Mr Suraj Palavalsa - *Operationalising Project Mausam: Building India's Maritime Consciousness & Regional Leadership* (NMF, 2025) • **Moderator:** Capt (IN) Sarbjeet S Parmar (Retd)
2.6	1300-1355	**LUNCH BREAK**	

2.7	**1400-1500**	**THE INDIAN AIR FORCE ACROSS A CENTURY OF AIR POWER** • Mr Anchit Gupta - *RAF India to Vayu Bhawan - India's Air Headquarters Over the Last Century* (White Falcon Publishing, 2024) • Mr Mayank Zade - *Second to One: Diamond Lessons from the 1965 Air War* (Sabre & Quill Nov 2025) • Mr Vishnu Som - T*he Sky Warriors: Operation Sindoor Unveiled* (Juggernaut, 2026) • **Moderator:** Air Mshl Awadhesh Kumar Bharti, SYSM, AVSM,VM (Retd)	**MILITARY HISTORIES OF INDIA: FROM PRINCELY STATES TO NATION-BUILDING** • Lt Gen Ghanshyam Singh Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) - *A Kashmir knight and the last 50 years of the princely state of J&K* (Sabre & Quill, 2025). • Mr Sarabjit Singh - *A Century in Stirrups: Three generation of Indian Cavalry Men* (Sabre & Quill, 2026). • Col D P K Pillay, SC, PhD (Retd) - *India at War: Empires, Battles and the Making of a Nation* (Penguin Random House India, 2026). • **Moderator:** Col Mandeep Singh (Retd
2.8	**1505-1625**	**JOINT SESSION: 25 YEARS OF INSTITUTIONALISING JOINTMANSHIP - HQ IDS AND THE ANDAMAN & NICOBAR COMMAND (ANC): ROAD COVERED AND THE WAY AHEAD** 1540-1550 hrs: Address by Air Marshal Tejinder Singh, PVSM, AVSM, VM - CISC (Chief Guest) 1550-1600 hrs: **Book Release:** Ms Somi Tandon - *My Journey to the South Block and Beyond: Life Story of a Smalltown Girl Who Broke the Glass Ceiling...* (Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 2026) 1605-1650 hrs: **Panel Discussion:** • Lt Gen P S Rajeshwar, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd) - Former CISC & CINCAN • V Adm A K Singh, PVSM, AVSM, NM (Retd) - Former CINCAN • Air Mshl B R Krishna, PVSM, AVSM, SC (Retd) - Former CISC • **Moderator:** Lt Gen Ajai Singh, PVSM, AVSM (Retd) 1655-1700 hrs: Felicitation of speakers by CISC & DG	
2.9	**1625-1645**	**TEA BREAK**	
2.10	**1650-1735**	**WOMEN OFFICERS – TACKING AHEAD, BREAKING BARRIERS** Conversation with women officers of all three services, who participated in India's global sailing expedition, named *Samudra Pradakshina* and *Navika Sagar Parikrama* • Lt Col Anuja Varudkar • Lt Cdr Dilna K, SC • Wg Cdr Vibha Singh • **Moderator:** Ms Barkha Dutt	
2.11	**1740-1800**	**CLOSING ADDRESS** General N S Raja Subramani, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM - Chief of the Defence Staff	
2.12	**1800-1810**	**VOTE OF THANKS** by Sqn Ldr RTS Chhina, Director CMHCS **National Song & National Anthem**	

Day - 1

Special Session

MILITARY HISTORY OF GARHWAL RIFLES

SESSION 1 / 30th October 2026 Friday **/ 1035-1135 Hrs**

As the first session of IMHF 2026, this special session celebrates one of the Indian Army's most honoured regiments. From the misty ridges of Garhwal to the world's toughest frontiers, the Garhwal Rifles have marched with grit, grace and glory. Raised in 1887 and rooted in Lansdowne, the Regiment carries a motto drawn from the Gita, Yudhaya Krit Nishchaya - Fight with Determination. It's war cry, Badri Vishal Lal Ki Jai, echoes the faith of the hills. Awarded the "Royal" title for gallantry in the First World War, the gallant Bhullas have carried that legacy firmly into the present times. Today, they stand guard in some of the most remote and unforgiving regions, serve with distinction in the United Nations Peace Keeping Missions, and have triumphed at the Cambrian Patrol, widely known as the "Olympics of Patrolling", where the world's finest units compete. Join the country's most distinguished military leaders as they trace how a storied heritage continues to shape a regiment that is proud of its past and prepared for the future.



MODERATOR
MAJ GEN GAJINDER SINGH CHANDEL, AVSM, PHD (RETD)

Commissioned into the 6th Battalion, The Garhwal Rifles, Major General Gajinder Singh commanded the troops along the Indo-China border and in the Northeast, and a Mountain Division guarding the Line of Actual Control. With vast experience in the UN peacekeeping operations and a PhD in Peace and Conflict Studies, he writes on national security and leadership. After retiring in 2021, he embraced community work.

PANELISTS



Lt Gen Syed Ata Hasnain, PVSM, UYSM, AVSM, SM, VSM & Bar (Retd), Hon'ble Governor of Bihar

Lieutenant General Syed Ata Hasnain was commissioned into the 4th Battalion, The Garhwal Rifles, the unit raised by his father, Maj Gen Syed Mahdi Hasnain, PVSM. He served in Op Pawan and with the UN in Mozambique & Rwanda. He is an alumnus of Army War College, Mhow, the Royal College of Defence Studies, London, and King's College London. He commanded 15 Corps and 21 Corps, and served as the Military Secretary before retiring. A widely respected commentator on strategic and security affairs, he writes regularly for major newspapers and is now the Governor of Bihar.



Gen N S Raja Subramani, PVSM, AVSM, SM, VSM, CDS

General N S Raja Subramani, commissioned into The Garhwal Rifles, is the 3rd Chief of Defence Staff and Secretary, Department of Military Affairs. An alumnus of the Joint Services Command and Staff College, Bracknell, and National Defence College, he holds degrees from King's College London and Madras University. Previously, he was GOC-in-C Central Command, 47th Vice Chief of the Army Staff and Military Adviser to the National Security Council Secretariat.



Lt Gen Dinesh Rana, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, SM, PhD; Colonel of the Regiment Garhwal Rifles

An alumnus of NDA and IMA, Lieutenant General Dinesh Singh Rana, was commissioned into the Garhwal Rifles and later attended DSSC, NDC, the Centre for National Defence Studies, Madrid, and the National Defense University, United States. He previously served as GOC IV Corps, Director General Defence Intelligence Agency and C-in-C Andaman and Nicobar Command. A scholar warrior with a PhD, he is Commander-in-Chief, Strategic Forces Command.

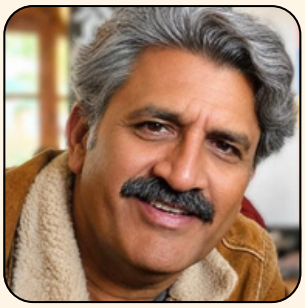
Garhwal Rifles

ROLE & CONTRIBUTIONS

SESSION 2A / 30th October 2026 Friday **/ 1200-1245 Hrs**

In the quiet, cloud-wrapped corners of the Himalayas, where mountain mornings meet marching boots, a regiment's story begins... That regiment is the Garhwal Rifles. From the land of Lord Badri to the trenches of Europe, its soldiers marched into the World Wars, conflicts unlike any they had known. Strangers to the climate, the language and the thunder of modern weaponry, they met bombardment, barbed wire and aerial warfare with unbroken resolve, far from home. Decades later, that same spirit crossed the seas again. In Sri Lanka, during Operation Pawan, the Regiment served with the Indian Peace Keeping Force across the island's north and east, where Officers and JCOs met a testing mission with courage and calm. Two campaigns, two continents, one creed: duty, discipline and determination. Join this session to trace how the Garhwal Rifles turned hardship into heritage and trial into triumph.

MODERATOR
COL SUNIL KOTNALA (RETD)



Col Sunil Kotnala is a third-generation Army officer with 25 years of distinguished service in the Indian Army. He was commissioned into the 5th Battalion, of the Garhwal Rifles, once commanded by his father. As an author, screenwriter and filmmaker, he has conceptualised, produced, directed and hosted "Jai Badri Vishal", a podcast series dedicated to the Garhwal Rifles, soon to be available on social media. He has also created and acted in commercial films and documentaries.

PANELISTS



Lt Gen Mohan Bhandari, PVSM, AVSM*, PhD (Retd)

Commissioned into the 7th Battalion, Garhwal Rifles, in June 1967, Lieutenant General Bhandari is a veteran of the 1971 Indo-Pak War, with extensive experience in counter insurgency operations and command. His service included key appointments during Op Pawan and Op Vijay. The General officer was the Colonel of the Garhwal Rifles and Garhwal Scouts before superannuation from his service as DG NCC.



Maj Gen Arjun Muthanna, SM (Retd)

Commissioned into the Garhwal Rifles in 1978, Major General Arjun Muthanna is an alumnus of Sainik School Bijapur and IMA Dehradun. His military career spanned service in border and insurgency affected areas, including Operation Pawan. An academic in Defence Studies, holding an M.Sc. and M.Phil., he has authored ten books on the IPKF, military humour and Kodava military heritage.



Mr Devesh Joshi

Devesh Joshi is an established writer on the education, culture, tourism and history of Uttarakhand. His extensively researched book, "Garhwal and the First World War", was longlisted for the prestigious Valley of Words Award. He has contributed to Garhwali language study material at Uttarakhand Open University and is currently a lecturer at Govt Inter College, Dakpathar, Dehradun.

Sappers

SIEGES AND FRONTLINES ACROSS CENTURIES OF COMBAT

SESSION 2B / 30th October 2026 Friday **/ 1200-1245 Hrs**

Troops seize the summit, while sappers secure the steps below. Raised in 1780 and carried forward by the Madras, Bengal and Bombay Sappers, the Corps of Engineers has served as the Army's quiet advance party for well over two centuries. On the battlefield, they enable advances by building bridges, tracks and helipads, while using minefields, demolitions and defensive barriers to thwart enemy operations. In peacetime, they construct the airfields, docks, roads and barracks that the tri-services rely on. Its motto, Sarvatra, means everywhere, and in every era of combat the sappers have lived it. Wherever the terrain says no, they find a way through, turning the science of engineering into the art of warfare. Explore the world of combat engineers, the men who make movement possible, bridge the gap between obstacles and objectives, and build the road to victory.



MODERATOR: MAJ GEN PAWAN ANAND, AVSM, PHD (RETD)

Maj Gen Pawan Anand was commissioned into the Corps of Engineers, earning the President's Gold Medal at NDA and the Sword of Honour at IMA. He commanded an Armoured Engineer Regiment and an Engineer Brigade in a Strike Corps, and served as Chief Engineer, South Western Command. He is an alumnus of DSSC, HDMC and NDC, and has represented India at international delegations and cooperation conferences.

PANELISTS



Lt Gen Vikas Rohella, AVSM, SM ** (E-in-C)

Lieutenant General Vikas Rohella, an alumnus of Sports School Rai, NDA, CDM and NDC, is a combat engineer and quintessential regimental soldier. He took part in Operations Vijay and Parakram, earning the Army Chief's Commendation for building a mule track along the shelled LoC. A Mechanical Engineer from CME with a PhD in Public Finance, he is Engineer-in-Chief, Indian Army, and Colonel Commandant, Bombay Sappers. He also compiled his regiment's 250-year history.



Maj Gen Ajay Kumar Chaturvedi, AVSM, VSM (Retd)

An Indian Army veteran and engineer by training, Major General Ajay holds an M Tech from IIT Madras and an M Phil in Strategic Studies. He commanded an Engineer Regiment, served as the Chief of Staff of a Tri-Service Command and held various other appointments. Recipient of the Veteran Achiever Award from the COAS, he writes on national security.



Col Ashwin N Baindur (Retd)

Colonel Ashwin is an Indian Army veteran with interests in military history, military archaeology and heritage preservation. He commanded 110 Engineer Regiment and was a Field Company Commander in Drass during Operation Vijay. He was also Director, Corps of Engineers Archives & Museum, CME Pune. He strives to keep the Corps' documentary and material heritage accessible to researchers and posterity.



Col Christopher John Rego (Retd)

An alumnus of NDA and IMA, Colonel Chris Rego served over three decades in the Corps of Engineers, retiring in January 2016. His tenures with the Assam Rifles and Border Roads Organisation in conflict-affected Mizoram and Manipur inspired "Peace through Education", which he now leads as CEO of Sunbird Trust. An author, traveller, pianist and nature enthusiast, he has photographed North-East India extensively.

Operation Safed Sagar

SESSION 3A / 30th October 2026 Friday **/ 1250-1335 Hrs**

Safed Sagar, the White Sea: a name as calm as the mission was complex. In 1999, as intruders occupied vantage points across Kargil, the Indian Air Force joined the Army's Operation Vijay with a mandate to strike, scout and support. Reconnaissance revealed what the enemy hid. Fighters struck with pinpoint accuracy. Escorts guarded the skies, and helicopters carried the wounded home and the supplies forward. Yet every sortie was flown within a firm limit. Aircrafts stayed on the Indian side of the Line of Control, making each mission a study in precision and planning. Together, sky and summit fought as one, and the mission was won on courage and coordination. Therefore, the operation became a lesson in air-ground synergy and strategic restraint, and a defining chapter in the story of Indian air power. Revisit the summer when the wings above made way for the soldiers below.



MODERATOR: SQN LDR RANA T S CHHINA, MBE (RETD), DIRECTOR, CMHCS

A former Indian Air Force helicopter pilot, Squadron Leader Rana T S Chhina heads USI's Centre for Military History and Conflict Studies. He has authored several books, served as Vice President of the Indian Military Historical Society, and was a member of the Government of India's Archival Advisory Board. He is a member of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Independent Advisory Panel, contributing to the preservation of India's tangible and intangible military heritage. His distinctions include the Macgregor Medal for the best military reconnaissance, an Honorary Membership of the Order of the British Empire (2016), and the Belgian Order of Leopold (2018).

PANELISTS



Air Chief Marshal B S Dhanoa, PVSM, AVSM, YSM, VM (Retd)

Air Chief Marshal Birender Singh Dhanoa was commissioned into the IAF as a fighter pilot in June 1978. An alumnus of Rashtriya Indian Military College, NDA and DSSC Wellington, he led 17 Sqn (Golden Arrows) in evicting the enemy during Kargil. As Chief of the Air Staff from December 2016, he headed the IAF in the February 2019 Balakot Air Strikes deep inside Pakistani territory.



Ms Alka Ahuja

Alka Ahuja is the wife of the late Sqn Ldr Ajay Ahuja, Vir Chakra, who made the supreme sacrifice during Op Safed Sagar. Her story is one of the courage beyond the battlefield, a testament to the strength of the families who bear the enduring cost of a soldier's sacrifice. Now an entrepreneur, she keeps his memory and legacy alive.



Mr Kushal Srivastava

Kushal is an Indian film director and producer who served in the Indian Air Force for seven years as an Equipment Assistant in the Logistics Department. Drawing on his military experience, he created and developed Operation Safed Sagar, a Netflix series depicting the IAF's role in the Kargil War. He also directed The Last Salute, a documentary on the MiG 21 and its retirement from service.



Ms Antara Srivastava

Antara conceptualised Op Safed Sagar with creator and showrunner Kushal, envisioning it in 2018 as a feature film, later a web series. She is its researcher and associate director, producer of Netflix's The Last Salute and associate producer of Vodka Diaries. She is also a recipient of the National Bravery Award (2007).

Re-examining India's Military History

WARS OF THE INDIAN ARMY IN RETROSPECT 1947–1999

SESSION 3B / 30th October 2026 Friday **/ 1250-1335 Hrs**

Every victory has a footnote that deserves a chapter. From the airfield at Srinagar to the snows of Rezang La, from the Thar desert and the sands of Kutch to the riverine delta of the east and the summit of Tiger Hill, the battles of 1947 to 1999 were fought across every terrain and tested every arm of the Army: infantry and armour, gunners and engineers, signallers and medics. Each war brought its own lessons in courage, command and coordination. Banners and battle honours often mark the front line, yet behind it worked the unsung arms, quietly and without fanfare, to shape the course of each campaign. This session reopens five decades of wars and asks who held the line, who cleared the path and who carried the day. The answer, it turns out, is never just one. Let's revisit the forces that served, and recover what the passing years have overlooked.



MODERATOR
MAJ GEN JAGATBIR SINGH, VSM (RETD)

Major General Jagatbir Singh, a second-generation officer, was commissioned into 18 Cavalry in December 1981. In a 38-year career, he commanded an Armoured Brigade in the Desert Sector through its conversion to Arjun tanks, and the First Armoured Division. He served as the UN Military Observer in Iraq and Kuwait, in counter-insurgency operations in the North East, and at DSSC Wellington, retiring as Director General of Resettlement. A prolific writer and speaker, he shares insights on defence and national security.

PANELISTS



Col Mandeep Singh (Retd)

Colonel Mandeep Singh (Retd) served in Army Air Defence. A graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, he commanded his Regiment during operations against Pakistan and later along the Line of Actual Control. He has authored seven books, including "History of Indian Air Defence Artillery 1940-1945" and "Forgotten: History of Hong Kong Singapore Royal Artillery."



Lt Col Kulvinder Singh (Retd)

A master gunner forged in combat, Lieutenant Colonel Kulvinder Singh (Retd) was commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery in June 1963. A graduate of Long Gunnery Staff Course (LGSC), DSSC Wellington, and Senior Command Course, he served as the Brigade Major, commanded 246 Mountain Regiment "Ascenders", was GSO-1 (Training), HQ Northern Command, and proceeded on PMR in June 1983. During the 1971 Indo-Pak War, as Battery Commander, 185 Light Regiment, he was the first Artillery Commander to reach Longewala.

War Memoirs & Memories

SESSION 4A / 30th October 2026
Friday **/ 1435-1525 Hrs**

Every war has two histories: the one that is recorded, and the one that is remembered. The remembered one is kept in faded photographs and folded letters, in medals preserved with care and legacies passed down with pride. Some of these memories begin on Kargil's icy heights, where a young Officer once vowed to return after hoisting the Tricolour or wrapped in it, a vow that still echoes across the nation. Few others were forged in the secretive world of the maroon beret, where soldiers are shaped to face the impossible. Now they return as memoirs by those who fought, led and lost. They reveal what history often overlooks: the comradeship that carries men through hard days, the love that lives beyond the line, and the quiet cost of patriotism, a sacrifice borne by soldiers and their families alike. Step into a session of stories seldom told, and discover the human heartbeat behind the uniform.

MODERATOR
MR SANDEEP UNNITHAN



Sandeep is a defence and national security journalist with three decades at The Indian Express, India Today and TV9, where he was the Editor for the News9 Plus, India's first OTT news app. A St. Xavier's College, Mumbai graduate in Ancient Indian History, he has authored multiple books and research papers for MP-IDSA and CLAWS. A passionate IDDM advocate, he hosted Guns of India.

PANELISTS



Mr Vishal Batra

Vishal Batra is the identical younger twin brother of Captain Vikram Batra, Param Vir Chakra awardee and one of India's most celebrated heroes of the Kargil War. Born just fourteen minutes apart and raised together in Palampur, Himachal Pradesh, the brothers shared an extraordinary bond built on friendship, love and shared dreams. To Vishal, Vikram was never just a national icon but his closest companion and other half. Through his memories and reflections, he keeps alive not only Vikram's courage and patriotism but also the warmth, humour and humanity of the man behind the uniform.



Col Kaushal Kashyap, SC (Retd)

A former Special Forces officer and Shaurya Chakra awardee, Colonel Kaushal Kashyap has two decades of experience in hostile, high-risk environments. He led missions across the Northeast and other challenging theatres, and was selected to command the NSG's elite 52 SAG, handling counter-terrorism, counter-hijack and sky marshal missions. A Staff College-qualified officer, he inspires young Indians through podcasts, interviews and digital platforms.

Shared Legacies

THE BRITISH INDIAN MILITARY HERITAGE PARTNERSHIP

SESSION 4B / 30th October 2026 Friday **/ 1435-1525 Hrs**

Some stories are too big for one nation to tell alone. For generations, British and Indian soldiers served in the same regiments, marched under the same colours and endured hardship side by side. Their uniforms, letters, medals and photographs now lie scattered across museums, archives and private collections on two continents, each a keepsake of a common past. Today, the two countries are bringing these treasures out of the shadows and into the light. Researchers, curators and historians are joining forces to study, conserve and open them to the public, and to exchange the best practices of museums in both countries. This session explores what it means to look after a shared legacy, and how the stories we keep together can draw us closer in the years ahead.



MODERATOR: PROF GAVIN RAND (UNIVERSITY OF GREENWICH)

Gavin Rand is Professor of History at the University of Greenwich, London. As a cultural historian, he researches the military in colonial South Asia, examining the people, institutions and ideas that shaped imperial military power, and has written on race, recruiting strategies and frontier conflicts. He is the academic lead for the Punjab Registers project, which has digitised and transcribed First World War records documenting some 320,000 Punjabi recruits.

PANELISTS



Dr Tejpal Ralmill (Community Historian)

Dr Tejpal's great grandfather Subadar Major Bawa Singh fought with the 23rd Sikh Pioneers alongside British servicemen in Aden, Egypt and Palestine during World War One. Dr Ralmill works with the Royal British Legion at Remembrance Events, with an expert knowledge of the Sikh Pioneers Regiments.



Dr Peter Johnston (IWM)

Dr Peter serves as the Director of Narrative & Content at the Imperial War Museum, where he oversees the development of compelling stories and educational content related to military history and war experiences. With deep expertise in curating historical narratives, he plays a key role in shaping the museum's exhibitions, publications, and multimedia projects. His work is central to engaging diverse audiences, ensuring that the museum's collections and resources effectively communicate the profound impact of conflict on societies, individuals, and global history.



Dr George Hay (CWGC)

Dr George is the Official Historian of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC), responsible for its history and for coordinating the historical narrative on war graves, cemeteries and memorials worldwide. He leads archival research, presents historical documents to the public, and shares the Commission's work through exhibitions, lectures and articles on the World Wars, commemoration and remembrance, so that future generations honour the sacrifice of the fallen.



Ms Jasmin Kaur Basra

Jasmin Basra is a PhD student at the University of Greenwich researching Punjabis who served in the First World War. Funded by the National Army Museum, her work investigates the war's impact and legacies on the Punjab region and global diaspora. Her research bridges the gap between official archives and lived experiences, directly addressing the marginalised voices of those who served and the families they left behind.

The Silent Sentinels

LOVE, LOSS AND RESILIENCE BEYOND THE UNIFORM

SESSION 5A / 30th October 2026 Friday **/ 1530-1630 Hrs**

Courage does not always wear camouflage. Sometimes it wears a brave smile, bears a lifelong loss and holds a home together with unshaken strength. A soldier is a husband to one, a son to another, a father to a few, and a hero to a nation. When duty calls, his whole family answers: in long waits and lonely vigils, in letters read and reread, in questions unanswered for decades. And when he does not return, pride and pain arrive together, and the medal becomes both an honour and a goodbye. Here, those left behind find their voice: mothers who turn grief into grace, wives who bid farewell with dignity and stand tall, families who keep searching and believing, each tear and testament - a chapter with no citation records. These are the silent sentinels, steady in sorrow and strong in spirit, proving that love and resilience can hold the line.



MODERATOR: MS ADITI PRASAD

Aditi Prasad is the Executive Editor and Head of Videos at The Times of India Digital, where she leads the organisation's digital video strategy and oversees news explainers, interviews, live shows and original video formats. A journalist and editor with over two decades of experience, she has previously headed digital videos for The Hindustan Times group and held senior editorial roles at TV Today, NewsX, Zee News, Africa News Network 7 and Planman Media. Aditi has edited books on India's rise, geopolitics and it's strategic and economic relationship with the United States.

PANELISTS



Ms Ambreen Zaidi

Ambreen Zaidi is a military author, journalist and activist who has worked for the welfare and dignity of soldiers, disabled veterans and war widows for nearly three decades. Her work in this field has been recognised by the President of India. A member of the Military Writers Guild, USA, she writes on national security, military affairs and the armed forces community.



Ms Meghna Girish

Born into a military family and married to a fighter pilot, Meghna Girish balanced a health-sector career with constant postings. Meghna's life changed forever when her soldier son courageously led his QRT to save many lives in the Nagrota terror attack, before making the supreme sacrifice for the nation.



Ms Geetika Lidder

A fourth-generation member of the armed forces, Geetika Lidder is a sapper's daughter and an infantry officer's wife who has welcomed life with open arms. With over 25 years of varied work experience, including a stint in Kazakhstan, she is now Vice Principal of the Junior School at the Shri Ram School, and lives in Delhi with her daughter Aashna.

Doctors at War

TESTIMONY, DUTY, AND THE ETHICS OF MILITARY MEDICINE

SESSION 5B / 30th October 2026 Friday **/ 1530-1630 Hrs**

In every war, there are two kinds of heroes: those who run towards the fight, and those who run towards the fallen. For the second kind, the stethoscope stands beside the service uniform, and skill meets selflessness in the pursuit of saving lives. Their operating theatre may be a tent, a borrowed room or a bunker, and their night shift may last for weeks. They stitch, steady and stay on duty long after others rest. Pain speaks one language, and their oath answers it without asking whose it is. Military doctors uphold a powerful principle: humanity comes first. The words Sarve Santu Niramayah, "may all be free from disease", are for them not only a prayer but a standard to live by. From wartime wards to a world gripped by a pandemic, courage, compassion and caring have been their constant medicine. This session invites you to listen to the healers in uniform, and to ask what it costs to heal in the shadow of war.



MODERATOR
SURG V ADM ARTI SARIN, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (RETD)

Surgeon Vice Admiral Arti Sarin, an alumnus of the prestigious Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, earned her MD in Radiodiagnosis there and a DNB in Radiation Oncology from Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai (2004). Trained in Gamma Knife Surgery at the University of Pittsburgh, she made history as the first woman Director General Armed Forces Medical Services (DGAFMS).

PANELISTS



Lt Gen Balakrishnan Jayan

Lieutenant General Balakrishnan Jayan is a distinguished military dental officer whose three-decade career spans clinical excellence, academia and strategic leadership. A specialist in orthodontics, he is widely credited with introducing and institutionalising Dental Sleep Medicine in India, and establishing its training and clinical practice across the Armed Forces. He formulated dental fitness standards for Gaganyaan, India's Human Space Programme. As Director General Dental Services, he now leads the Army Dental Corps at its highest level.



Lt Col Arup Ratan Basu, YSM (Retd)

Commissioned into the Army Medical Corps in 1989, Lieutenant Colonel Arup Ratan Basu pursued postgraduate studies in General Surgery. He spent 65 days at the Kargil field hospital in 1999, performing 250 surgeries, and was awarded the Yudh Seva Medal by the President of India. He later served with the Indian Medical Mission in Kabul and at various Command Hospitals across the country. He is a bilingual author, writing in Bangla and English.

India And World War 2

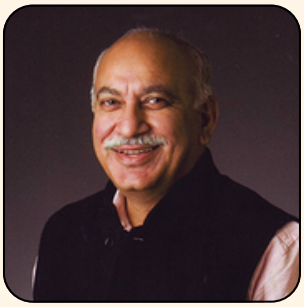
RESHAPING OF THE WORLD ORDER

SESSION 6 / 30th October 2026
Friday **/ 1700-1730 Hrs**

Empires fell, flags changed and maps were redrawn, and behind many of those changes stood India, a land of millions who marched into history, and walked out as a rising power. When the Second World War began, India was a colony, and the decision to join it was made without asking Indians. Yet millions came forward, forming the largest volunteer army in history. They fought across Europe, Africa, the Middle East and Asia, and held firm where the war threatened India itself. At home, factories, farms and ports became the Allies' supply line, at a heavy human cost. The war strained an exhausted empire and sharpened a nation's call for freedom. Independence soon followed, and a wave of decolonisation rolled across Asia and Africa. The old order gave way, and India, once a giver of men and materials, grew into a voice for the Global South. This session asks how a distant dispute became a decisive turning point, and how India's spirit and sacrifices helped to reshape the world's course.

A TALK BY

SHRI M J AKBAR
FORMER MINISTER OF STATE FOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS



An Indian journalist and author of several books, Mobasher Jawed Akbar launched India's first weekly political news periodicals, including India Today, Headlines Today, The Telegraph, The Asian Age and Deccan Chronicle. He served in Parliament from 1989 to 1991 and returned to public life in March 2014. Elected to the Rajya Sabha from Jharkhand in July 2015, he was Minister of State for External Affairs from 5 July 2016 to 17 October 2018.

The Indian Army and Nation-Building

LEGACY, VALUES AND CONTINUITY

SESSION 7 / 30th October 2026 Friday **/ 1735-1815 Hrs**

Naam, Namak, Nishan: a soldier's identity, a pledge of loyalty, and a flag worth defending. From the battlefields of the epics to the empires of ancient and medieval India, and from the trenches of the World Wars to the frontiers of a modern nation, the story of the Indian soldier is one of duty, discipline and dedication. Guided by dharma, this military heritage entered a new chapter with Independence, as the Indian Army became the guardian of a sovereign republic. From Himalayan glaciers and high-altitude outposts to the dense jungles of the Northeast, across sun-scorched deserts and expansive plains, the Army stands as the nation's sword and shield. Its battles have widened from conventional warfare to counter-insurgency operations, peacekeeping and the difficult task of winning hearts and minds. Through disaster relief and goodwill initiatives, the Army has also strengthened civil-military ties, while advancing defence diplomacy and self-reliance. Join this session to explore a living legacy of courage, compassion and commitment, and trace the values that continue to shape its role in strengthening the nation, anchored in its enduring motto: Service Before Self.



LT GEN SANDEEP JAIN, AVSM, SM, VICE CHIEF OF ARMY STAFF

Lieutenant General Sandeep Jain, AVSM, SM, is the 50th Vice Chief of the Army Staff, with over four decades of service. An alumnus of the National Defence Academy, commissioned into the Infantry in June 1988, he attended DSSC Wellington, Army War College, Mhow and National Defence College, Kenya. He commanded an Infantry Battalion, a UN Sector in Sudan, an Infantry Brigade, a Counter-Insurgency Force and a Corps, and led Southern Command. As Commandant, IMA, and DG Capability Development, he advanced force modernisation. He is an avid reader and keen sportsman.

FIRESIDE CHAT



LT GEN RAKESH KAPOOR, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (RETD)

A graduate of St. Stephen's College, Delhi University, Lieutenant General Rakesh Kapoor, AVSM, VSM, was commissioned into 63 Cavalry in December 1987. He held appointments from the Rann of Kutch to the Eastern Sector, advised the Botswana Defence Force, and represented India at the SCO Military Experts Working Group. With an M.Phil. and degrees in defence and management studies, he served as Deputy Chief of the Army Staff before retiring.

Day - 2

Chief Guest



Admiral Krishna Swaminathan, PVSM, AVSM, VSM, PhD
Chief of the Naval Staff

Admiral Krishna Swaminathan was commissioned into the Indian Navy on 01 July 1987. A Communication and Electronic Warfare specialist, he has held a wide range of operational, staff and training appointments during a distinguished career spanning nearly four decades. Adm Swaminathan's sea commands include the guided missile vessels INS Vidyut and INS Vinash, guided missile corvette INS Kulish, guided missile destroyer INS Mysore and aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya. On promotion to the rank of Rear Admiral, he served as the Chief Staff Officer (Training) at Headquarters, Southern Naval Command, Kochi. He was subsequently appointed as Flag Officer Sea Training and later commanded the Western Fleet, the Sword Arm of the Indian Navy. Subsequently, he was appointed as Flag Officer Offshore Defence Advisory Group and Advisor, Offshore Security and Defence to the Government of India. On promotion to the rank of Vice Admiral, he tenanted the appointments of Chief of Staff, Western Naval Command; and Controller Personnel Services, Chief of Personnel and Vice Chief of the Naval Staff at Naval Headquarters. Prior assuming charge as the Chief of the Naval Staff, Admiral Swaminathan was the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the prestigious Western Naval Command. He is an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla; Joint Services Command and Staff College, Shrivenham, United Kingdom; College of Naval Warfare, Karanja; and the United States Naval War College, Newport, Rhode Island. His academic qualifications include a BSc degree from Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi; MSc in Telecommunications from Cochin University of Science and Technology, Kochi; MA in Defence Studies from King's College, London; MPhil in Strategic Studies from Mumbai University; and a PhD in International Studies from Mumbai University.

Indian Navy's Indigenisation Journey

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

SESSION 1 / 31st October 2026 Saturday **/ 1055-1210 Hrs**

Once, the Indian Navy bought its ships. Today, it builds them. From dependence on foreign suppliers to designing and developing homegrown warships, India's maritime journey reflects the growing strength of Aatmanirbharta. With indigenous ship design, expanding domestic production and stronger partnerships with Indian industry, the Indian Navy is steadily charting its course from a Buyer's Navy to a Builder's Navy. But this is about more than pride. Self-reliance secures supply chains, sustains far-off deployments and keeps the Navy ready as the Indian Ocean's first responder. Guided by the Indian Naval Indigenisation Plan and Vision 2047, the effort extends beyond shipbuilding to strategic autonomy, innovation and national capability. This session traces the past, present and future of that voyage, where every ship launched carries a nation's ambition, enterprise and resolve to shape its own maritime destiny.



MODERATOR: CMDE SRIKANT B KESNUR, VSM, PHD (RETD)

Commodore Srikant Kesnur, completed 36 illustrious Naval years at sea, ashore and in training. He directed the Maritime Warfare Centres in Mumbai and Visakhapatnam and headed the Naval History Project. With a PhD and five other postgraduate degrees, he was the Lead Writer/Chief Editor of 12 Navy books. After retirement in 2022, he continues to write, speak and teach about maritime issues at various forums and institutions.

PANELISTS



V Adm B Sivakumar, AVSM, VSM, Chief of Materiel

Vice Admiral B Sivakumar, an alumnus of the National Defence Academy, was commissioned as an Electrical Officer in the Indian Navy in 1987. He holds Master's degrees in Engineering from IIT Chennai and Management from Osmania University. He served onboard Ranjit, Kirpan and Akshay and commanded INS Valsura. The Flag Officer has held various important appointments in the Staff and Materiel Branch at Naval and Command Headquarters, Dockyard and Training Establishments, and is now Chief of Materiel, Indian Navy.



R Adm Sujit Baxi, DG, Warship Design Bureau

Rear Admiral Sujit Baxi, Director General Warship Design Bureau, was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 1993. He holds a BTech in Naval Architecture and Shipbuilding from CUSAT, a postgraduation in Naval Construction from IIT Delhi and a Tech in Corrosion Science from IIT Powai, and attended the Higher Defence Management Course, CDM Secunderabad. Associated with most ship and submarine building projects, including four Aircraft Carriers and the ancient stitched ship project, he enjoys problem solving and sports.

PANELISTS



Capt (IN) N S Mohan Ram, VSM (Retd)

Captain N S Mohan Ram, VSM, is an IIT Kharagpur alumnus who specialised in warship design at the Royal Naval College, Greenwich, and later earned an MBA from the University of Delhi. As a Naval Constructor, he contributed to India's indigenous warship design programme, notably the Godavari class guided missile frigates, alongside Leander class modifications, Seaward Defence Boats and Landing Ship Tanks. After retiring, he headed design at the Mazagon Dock, contributing to Coast Guard Offshore Patrol Vessels and a Diving Support Vessel programme. His career later spanned the automotive industry, where, as President of TVS Suzuki, he spearheaded the development of the iconic TVS Scooty.



Cmde Arun P Golaya, VSM, PhD (Retd)

An alumnus of NDA, Commodore Arun was commissioned into the Indian Navy and specialised in Navigation, Aircraft Direction and Naval Operations. With over three decades of service, he commanded three ships, including one on deputation to the Indian Coast Guard, and was the Joint Director, Net Centric Operations. He served eight years at the NSCS, helped establish the Technology Development Acceleration Cell, and spearheaded SPRINT and Swavlamban.



Cmde Pramod R Kulkarni, PhD (Retd)

Commodore Pramod R Kulkarni had a distinguished 36-year career in the Corps of Naval Constructors, Indian Navy. He holds a PG Diploma and PhD from IIT Delhi and an MSc in Naval Architecture from University College London. Associated with the product lifecycle of warships and submarines, he held appointments in the Navy, DRDO and IIT Delhi. Currently, he is Pro Vice Chancellor, School of Design Engineering, REVA University, Bengaluru, where he blends academia and industry experience, with a particular interest in Design Education.

1946 — 1971

UPRISING TO RISEN

SESSION 2A / 31st October 2026 Saturday **/ 1215-1300 Hrs**

In 1946, the sea sent a warning. And in 1971, it sent a surprise. The first wave unsettled an empire; the next set the sea ablaze and changed the course of naval warfare. From the naval docks emerged a powerful expression of defiance, as Royal Indian Navy ratings challenged colonial authority and added a new dimension to India's struggle for independence, intensifying the pressures that ended an empire's hold on the subcontinent. A quarter century later, Operation Trident showcased the Indian Navy' stealth and striking power, as missile boats launched a swift, silent and sudden assault on Karachi harbour, sinking enemy vessels, igniting fuel installations and disrupting Pakistan's naval operations without losing an Indian vessel. Join this session to trace India's naval journey, from its turbulent early years to the triumph of a rising maritime force, and to remember why the fourth of December is celebrated as Navy Day.



MODERATOR
CMDE SRIKANT B KESNUR, VSM, PHD (RETD)

Commodore Srikant Kesnur completed 36 illustrious Naval years at sea, ashore, and in training. He directed the Maritime Warfare Centres in Mumbai and Visakhapatnam and headed the Naval History Project. With a PhD and five other postgraduate degrees, he was the Lead Writer/Chief Editor of 12 Navy books. After retirement in 2022, he continues to write, speak and teach about maritime issues at various forums and institutions.

PANELISTS



V Adm Anup Singh, PVSM, AVSM, NM (Retd)
A former C-in-C Eastern Naval Command, Vice Admiral Anup Singh commanded INS Matanga, Veer, Ranveer and Delhi during four decades of service. As Western Fleet commander, he led Operation Sukoon in Lebanon. A keen yachtsman, he skippered INSV Samudra across the Pacific. His senior appointments included Deputy Chief of Naval Staff and Deputy Chief of Integrated Staff. Post-retirement, he researches Indo-Pacific geopolitics and is Director (Strategic Studies), SIOS.



Cdr Vipin Sharma (Retd)
Commander Vipin Sharma (Retd), son of Lt Cdr G D Sharma, VSM (Retd), was commissioned in the Indian Navy on 1 January 1985 and selected for the submarine arm. Specialising in Naval Communications and Electronic Warfare, he held several operational appointments and commanded two submarines. He is now Secretary of the Navy Foundation, Dehradun Chapter in Uttarakhand.



Mr Swaroop Anand
Founder of Meluha Maritime, a boutique consulting firm in the maritime and naval knowledge domain, Swaroop Anand is a military historian focused on Indian naval history. He has researched and documented the Indian Navy and its distinguished personalities, authoring numerous biographical profiles of its leaders.



Mr Sandeep Unnithan
Sandeep is a defence and national security journalist with three decades at The Indian Express, India Today and TV9, where he was Editor, News9 Plus, India's first OTT news app. A St. Xavier's College, Mumbai graduate in Ancient Indian History, he has authored books and research papers for MP-IDSA and CLAWS. A passionate IDDM advocate, he hosted Guns of India.

Ports, Power, And The Long History Of Indian Maritime Ambition

SESSION 2B / 31st October 2026 Saturday **/ 1215-1300 Hrs**

The sea has always been India's neighbour and, for millennia, its favourite highway. Spices, silk and scholarship once left Indian harbours, and the world rearranged its routes to receive them. Long before maps had borders, or anyone had heard the word "globalisation", India's harbours were already linking continents. Its ports were more than docks; they were doorways where cultures met and ambition set sail. That legacy still shapes the Indian Navy's ethos. From the shadow of the Royal Indian Navy rose a blue-water force. It fought in 1965 and 1971, stood strong in Operation Sindoor and carried relief across the Indian Ocean. Submarines glide below, aircraft fly above, and a carrier of Indian make leads the way. Today, naval diplomacy and renewed trade ties link Southeast Asia, Africa, West Asia and beyond. Step aboard this session to see how a seafaring civilisation's maritime heritage, anchored in ancient ports, now sails with a modern naval power.

MODERATOR: CAPT (IN) SARBJEET S PARMAR (RETD)



Captain Sarabjeet S Parmar is a retired Indian Naval officer with considerable operational, command and staff appointments. He has worked at the Navy's strategic apex offices focusing on Indo-Pacific maritime assessments and in policy-oriented think tanks. His main areas of research include national and maritime strategy and security related aspects in the Indo-Pacific, piracy, HADR, and international maritime law.

PANELISTS



Cmde Abhay Singh (Retd)

Commodore Abhay Kumar Singh (Retd) is an author, strategic analyst and commentator specialising in maritime security, naval strategy and Indo-Pacific geopolitics. An Indian Navy veteran, he served as Director (Military Affairs), Disarmament and International Security Affairs Division, Ministry of External Affairs, and later as Research Fellow at MP-IDSA. He regularly contributes to academic journals and policy publications.



Lt Cdr Anupama Thapliyal

Lieutenant Commander Anupama Thapliyal is a naval historian and Deputy Officer-in-Charge, Naval History Division, Indian Navy. Formerly faculty for Military and Maritime History at the Indian Naval Academy, this prolific researcher has authored several books, including Breaking Waves, Making History and Forged by the Sea, and played a crucial role in documenting the Navy's official history, A Decade of Transformation (2011-2021).



Mr Suraj Palavalsa

Suraj Palavalsa is a Research Associate at the National Maritime Foundation, India, researching the revival of India's maritime consciousness, ports and maritime connectivity. His interests extend to the Global South, Traditional Knowledge Systems and soft power. He has participated in the NASA Space Settlement Design Contest and served as a G20 Student Ambassador.

The Indian Air Force Across A Century Of Air Power

SESSION 3A / 31st October 2026 Saturday **/ 1400-1500 Hrs**

From a modest headquarters in an undivided India to a modern air force with global reach, the journey of the Indian Air Force is a story of vision, velocity and valour. Born in 1932 under British rule, the Service was still in its infancy when the Second World War broadened its experience. Partition then transformed the subcontinent, and with Independence the IAF began a new chapter, spreading its wings with the nation it served and safeguarding the skies of a free India. From the dogfights of 1965 and 1971 to the precision-driven missions of Operation Sindoor, it has evolved with the changing tactics, technologies and the tempo of aerial warfare. This session retraces that flight path, from fragile beginnings to a formidable force, and looks towards a future where Indian air power reaches greater heights, carrying forward a century of courage, capability and national commitment.



MODERATOR: AIR MSHL AWADHESH KUMAR BHARTI, SYSM, AVSM, VM (RETD)

Air Marshal A K Bharti, commissioned into the fighter stream in 1987, is an alumnus of the NDA, DSSC Wellington and NDC, New Delhi. A Fighter Combat Leader and accomplished Su-30MKI pilot, he commanded a fighter squadron and air base, and served as Senior Air Staff Officer, Central Air Command, and Director General of Air Operations. Under his leadership, the IAF enhanced readiness during Operation Sindoor.

PANELISTS



Mr Anchit Gupta

Anchit Gupta is a military aviation historian and founder of IAFHistory.in, a digital archive devoted to researching and preserving the history of the Indian Air Force. His work spans operational history, personalities, institutions, aircraft and airbases, and is built largely from primary records, service data and veterans' accounts. For documenting and communicating IAF history, he earned a Chief of the Air Staff Commendation in 2024 and an AOC-in-C Commendation in 2025. Professionally, Anchit is the Managing Director at Samara Capital.



Mr Mayank Zade

Mayank Zade is an engineering graduate, and an aviation enthusiast. He is fond of reading on military aviation affairs and following developments in the field. He has authored a book on the 1965 Indo-Pak air war, and takes a keen interest in applying lessons of foreign conflicts to an Indian context. He is an avid aeromodeller, and pursues drone flying in his free time.



Mr Vishnu Som

Vishnu Som is a renowned Indian journalist, news anchor, and an NDTV veteran. He is the Senior Managing Editor and anchors the flagship programme Left, Right and Centre. He writes prolifically on national and international security and has covered the Kargil, Afghanistan, Iraq and Ukraine wars, as well as natural disasters around the world. He was named Best Television Presenter at the 2012 News Television Awards.

Military Histories of India

FROM PRINCELY STATES TO NATION-BUILDING

SESSION 3B / 31st October 2026 Saturday **/ 1400-1500 Hrs**

There was a time when India's map was drawn in many colours. Before Independence, large parts of the subcontinent were ruled from hundreds of palaces. Across the subcontinent, princely states kept their own courts, colours and cavalries, a mosaic of crowns held together by tradition and loyalty. Their soldiers marched far beyond home, serving in distant theatres of war and carrying a code of honour wherever they went. Then came 1947, and a defining question: how does a land of many thrones become one nation? Accession, integration and the merging of state forces into a national army shaped the answer, as the old order gave way to the new. This session explores how the sword of the state became the shield of the Republic, and how a civilisation that has endured invasion, empire and partition continues to renew itself. Duty once had a royal address. It now has a national one.



MODERATOR: COL MANDEEP SINGH (RETD)

Colonel Mandeep Singh (Retd) served in the Army Air Defence. A graduate of the Defence Services Staff College, he commanded his Regiment during operations against Pakistan and later along the Line of Actual Control. He has authored seven books, including "History of Indian Air Defence Artillery 1940-1945" and "Forgotten: History of Hong Kong Singapore Royal Artillery."

PANELISTS



Lt Gen Ghanshyam Singh Katoch, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)

Lieutenant General G S Katoch is an infantry officer and alumnus of the DSSC, Higher Command Course, and NDC. He holds degrees from JNU, Madras University, the Naval Postgraduate School (USA), and Devi Ahilyabai University. He commanded formations across the LoC, LAC and Desert Sector, retiring in 2016 as Director General, Perspective Planning. A Distinguished Fellow at USI and CLAWS, he has authored three books.



Mr Sarabjit Singh

Sarbjit Singh, born into a family of cavalry officers, studied at Bishop Cotton School, Simla, and graduated from IIM Calcutta. His 48-year corporate career, including 25 years with Dunlop India, spanned India, Kenya and Europe. He makes videos on birds and nature, earned a karate black belt after beginning at sixty, and lives by one rule: set yourself challenges, and conquer them.



Col D P K Pillay, SC, PhD (Retd)

Colonel Divakaran Padma Kumar Pillay (Retd) was awarded the Shaurya Chakra for evacuating wounded children in Tamenglong, Manipur, despite life-threatening injuries, and was made an honorary tribe member by the villagers. He was the first service officer in the MoD secretariat and the first Indian armed forces officer to serve as an ICRC Armed Forces Delegate. A strategic affairs commentator, he continues research on violent extremism at MP-IDSA.

Chief Guest



Air Marshal Tejinder Singh, PVSM, AVSM, VM
Chief of Integrated Staff Committee

Air Marshal Tejinder Singh took over as the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC) on July 01, 2026. An alumnus of National Defence Academy, Defence Service Staff College and National Defence College, Air Marshal Tejinder Singh was commissioned into the fighter stream of the Indian Air Force on June 13, 1987. He is a Category 'A' Qualified Flying Instructor with over 4,500 hours of flying experience. He has commanded a Fighter Squadron, a Radar Station, a premier Fighter Base and was Air Officer Commanding, Jammu & Kashmir. Prior to his present appointment, the Air Marshal was the Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief (AOC-in-C), South Western Air Command. His varied staff appointments include Operational Staff at a Command HQ, Air Commodore (Personnel Officers - 1) at Air Headquarters, Deputy Assistant Chief of Integrated Defence Staff, Financial (Planning) at HQ IDS, Air Commodore (Aerospace Safety), Assistant Chief of Air Staff Ops (Offensive), Assistant Chief of Air Staff Ops (Strategy) at Air Headquarters, Senior Air Staff Officer, Eastern Air Command, Deputy Chief of the Air Staff and AOC-in-C, Training Command.

Joint Session

25 YEARS OF INSTITUTIONALISING JOINTMANSHIP – HQ IDS AND THE ANDAMAN & NICOBAR COMMAND: ROAD COVERED AND THE WAY AHEAD

SESSION 4 / 31st October 2026
Saturday **/ 1505-1625 Hrs**

In 2001, at the meeting point of shore, sea and sky, India planted a new banner of unity on a distant island chain. It began as an experiment in working together and became a way of working. With one clear vision and one chain of command, the services now safeguard vital maritime routes, counter piracy and smuggling, and meet disaster and distress with speed, strength and steady resolve. Behind this effort stands Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff, which has spent a quarter-century turning jointness, integration and synergy from doctrine into daily habit. Join us for the Silver Jubilee reflection on the journey so far, milestones met, the lessons learned, and for a look at a future where emerging threats, evolving technologies and expanding theatres will draw the Army, Navy and Air Force closer, to combine their capabilities and complement each other's courage.

MODERATOR
LT GEN AJAI SINGH, PVSM, AVSM, (RETD)



Lt Gen Ajai is a fifth-generation soldier from a family with over 162 years of service in the cavalry and armoured corps. An alumnus of The Lawrence School, Sanawar, NDA and IMA, he was commissioned into the 81st Armoured Regiment, which his father had raised a decade earlier. He holds four master's degrees, including one from King's College London and served as the 16th C-in-C, Andaman and Nicobar Command.

PANELISTS



Lt Gen P S Rajeshwar, PVSM, AVSM, VSM (Retd)

Commissioned into the Regiment of Artillery in December 1980, Lieutenant General Podali Shankar Rajeshwar is a gunner, an aviator and, an alumnus of DSSC, Army War College and National Defence Colleges in New Delhi and the Philippines. He took part in Operations Meghdoot, Rakshak and Parakram, served with the UN in Mozambique and Rwanda, and held apex tri-service appointments as CISC and C-in-C, Andaman & Nicobar Command, retiring in May 2020.



V Adm A K Singh, PVSM, AVSM, NM (Retd)

An NDA alumnus, Vice Admiral Arun Kumar Singh commanded submarines, ships, INS Virbahu and India's first Kilo class submarine squadron. At Naval Headquarters, he served as Director of Tactics, Director of Submarine Operations and Assistant Chief of Naval Staff (Submarine), authoring the 30 Year Submarine Construction Plan. As Fleet Commander, he introduced a high speed probe for naval vessels. He later led the Indian Coast Guard as Director General and the Eastern Naval Command as Commander in Chief.



Air Mshl B R Krishna, PVSM, AVSM, SC (Retd)

An alumnus of NDA, DSSC and NDC, he is a Fighter and Experimental Test Pilot with over 5,000 flying hours, contributing to the LCA programme and Saras flight testing. He was DG Air Operations, AOC-in-C Western Air Command and CISC. Post-retirement, he served on the DRDO Reforms Committee and is a Member of ISpA's National Advisory Committee and Visiting Professor of Practice, IIT Kanpur.

Women Officers

TACKING AHEAD, BREAKING BARRIERS

SESSION 5 / 31st October 2026 Saturday **/ 1650-1735 Hrs**

"The sea is an honest examiner; it tests every sailor alike." That truth defined the Navika Sagar Parikrama II expedition, where two women Naval officers broke new ground by sailing as a unified crew. For the first time, women officers of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force sailed as one crew, bound by a single mission and a shared sense of purpose. Sailing an indigenously built vessel, they met the sea's changing moods with seamanship, stamina and strategy, guided by the compass and the constellations, as the coastline faded behind them and the vast ocean opened before them. Theirs was a voyage of firsts and a lesson in jointness. Three uniforms moved in perfect synergy, showing that gender equality is not a gesture but a gift to the whole force and growth for the nation. It stood for Nari Shakti, for self-reliance and for a maritime vision that looks far beyond the coast, while listening to what the ocean had to tell. Meet the women crew who led from the front, and join us to hear how the voyage's storms tested their will and widened everyone else's horizons.



MODERATOR: MS BARKHA DUTT

Barkha Dutt is an award-winning journalist, anchor, columnist and author, whose frontline reporting on the Kargil conflict made her a household name. With over two decades of experience, she has covered conflict zones including Pakistan, Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Egypt. India's only Emmy-nominated journalist and a Padma Shri awardee, she is the founder-editor of Mojo Story.

PANELISTS



Lt Col Anuja Varudkar, Expedition Leader

Lieutenant Colonel Anuja is an officer of the Corps of Engineers with 22 years of service in the Indian Army. Her appointments include Deputy Quarter Master General of Engineer Brigade, Placement Officer of the Madras Sappers, Garrison Engineer in Assam and Senior Inspector of Electrical and Mechanical Equipment in Chennai Zone. A unit-level sportsperson and qualified open water diver, she enjoys reading and pencil sketching, and aims to inspire others through grit and grace.



Lt Cdr Dilna K, SC

A native of Calicut (Kozhikode), Kerala, Lieutenant Commander Dilna comes from a family with a strong service background. She was commissioned into the Indian Navy in 2014 as a Logistics Officer. She is the first Indian woman to be awarded the third highest Gallantry Award, the Shaurya Chakra, on Republic Day 2026 by the Honourable President, Smt. Droupadi Murmu, for exceptional courage and seamanship during Navika Sagar Parikrama II.



Wg Cdr Vibha Singh

Hailing from a defence family, Wing Commander Vibha Singh has served in the Indian Air Force for 14 years across operational and logistical appointments. She is a former Delhi University and Delhi Under-19 cricketer with degrees in Journalism and Organisational Behaviour Psychology. Fuelled by passion for adventure, she completed the TriServices All-Women Circumnavigation Expedition and hopes to inspire women and young Indians to embrace sailing.

Our Team



V ADM SANJAY JASJIT SINGH,
SYSM, PVSM, AVSM, NM,
PHD (RETD), DG, USI



SQN LDR RANA TS CHHINA,
MBE (RETD)
DIRECTOR CMHCS



R ADM DALBIR SINGH
GUJRAL, NM (RETD)
DIRECTOR ADM



LT CDR ATUL BHARDWAJ,
PHD (RETD)
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, CMHCS



CDR BHAVNA SALARIA (RETD)
PROJECT COORDINATOR IMHF
& SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW



MR NEELOTPAL MISHRA
AD (IT)



CAPT (IN) Y P SHARMA
ESTB OFFICER



Ms Arpita Biswas
Research Fellow



Ms Nutan Sharma
Research Assistant



Ms Monika Choudhary
Research Assistant

Our Team

SPECIAL THANKS



Col Prafulla Shrivastava



Col Sajiv Aman



Lt Col Madhur Chand Gullaria



Lt Col Kedar Shridhar Joshi



Mr Shivansh Singh
Graphic Designer



Mr Gaurav Kumar
Project Leader, GAP



Mr Dhananjay Shinde
Research Assistant



Mr Rakesh Agnihotri
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Ms Bharti Negi
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Mr Maheeth
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Ms A S Shalini
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Ms Nausheen Iqbal
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Our Interns



Ms Sreya Das



Mr Akiv Malhotra



Ms Roshni



Ms Vanshika Sawhney



Mr Kabir Ghai



Ms Sukhmani Dev



Ms Mahua Chakraborty



Ms Yashasvi Meena



Ms Pallavi Priya



MsYogita Shahi

Project Partners

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