

◆ SWARNIM VIJAY VARSH ◆

लक्ष्यानिवति: 50 1971 INDO-PAK WAR



Maj Hoshiar Singh Dahiya
PVC



Fg Offr Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon
PVC



2nd Lt Arun Khetrapal
PVC



L/Nk Albert Ekka
PVC



राज्य और रणनीति की साध्यता
एक राष्ट्र का जन्म

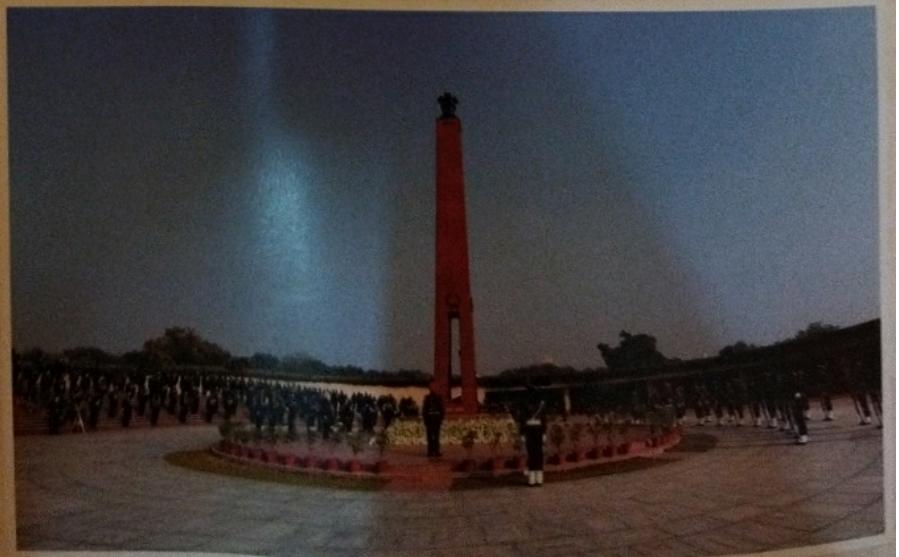
"On Vijay Diwas we recall the unwavering courage of our armed forces that resulted in a decisive victory for our nation in the 1971 war. On this special Vijay Diwas, had the honour of lighting the 'Swarnim Vijay Mashaal' at the National War Memorial."

—Shri Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India



(Above)
Hon'ble Prime Minister
Shri Narendra Modi
lighting the 'Swarnim Vijay
Mashaal' at the National War
Memorial, on the occasion
of Vijay Diwas on
16 December 2020.

(Right)
The National War Memorial,
New Delhi.



1971 INDO-PAK WAR



The Indo-Pak war of 1971 was not a consequence of any territorial dispute between the two countries. This was the external manifestation of an internal dispute of Pakistan. After years of perceived exploitation by Pakistan of its eastern wing, East Pakistan, a rebellion, or a 'struggle for liberation' as the latter liked to call it, had flared up. Lasting just 13 days, it is one of the shortest wars in history, with decisive victory for the Indian Armed Forces. Role of Air Power (IAF) in this war was exemplary with strategic effect on the outcome of war.

ORIGIN OF THE CRISIS

The dawn of 1971 saw a great human tragedy unfolding in erstwhile East Pakistan. "Operation Searchlight" was a planned military operation carried out by the Pakistan Army to curb the Bengali nationalist movement in the erstwhile East Pakistan in March 1971, which the Pakistani state retrospectively justified on the basis of anti-Bihari violence by Bengalis in early March.



The crackdown of 25 March 1971 ordered by Tikka Khan, left thousands of Bengalis dead, while Sheikh Mujibur Rehman was arrested the next day. Attempts to disarm Bengali troops was not entirely successful and within weeks of the crackdown massacres, many former Bengali officers and troops of the Pakistani Army had joined Bengali resistance fighters in different parts.

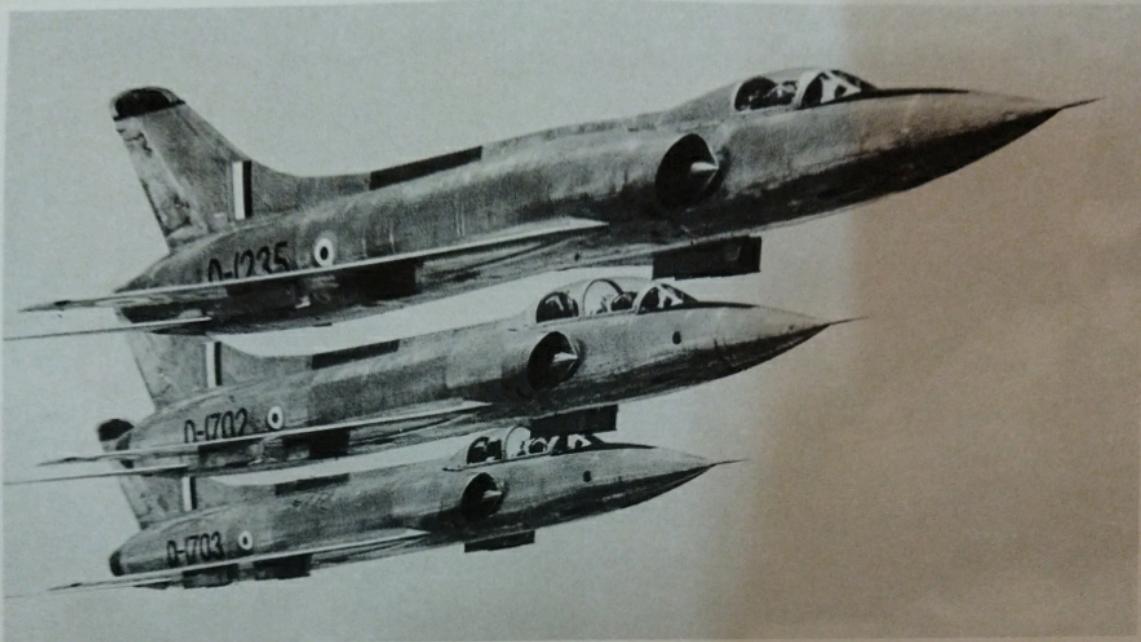
Mukti Bahini, also termed as the Freedom Fighters, collectively refers to the armed organisations that fought against the Pakistan Army during the Bangladesh Liberation War. It was dynamically formed by Bengali regulars and civilians after the proclamation of Bangladesh's independence on 26 March 1971. Mukti Bahini was the precursor to the formation of the Bangladesh defence force. As a fighting unit during the war, it carried out operations as a Bengali guerrilla army playing a key role in the battle of Sylhet, Garibpur and Boyra.

The East Pakistan-India borders were opened by the Indian Government to allow the Bengali refugees to find safe shelter. The resulting flood of impoverished East Pakistani refugees strained India's already overburdened economy.

By November 1971, an India-Pakistan war seemed inevitable.



INDIAN AIR FORCE OPERATIONS



The "Birth of Bangladesh" in 1971 owes a lot to air operations. As the political situation on the sub-continent deteriorated, the IAF was alerted to the possibility of another armed conflict.



On 22 November 1971, an aerial interception battle called **Battle of Boyra** was fought between IAF and intruding PAF jets that had crossed into Indian air space while giving cover to its ground forces.

A detachment of four Gnats of 22 Sqn intercepted the PAF aircraft. The PAF pilots ejected over Boyra and were made POW by Indian forces. The Battle of Boyra took place before the formal start of Indo-Pak war of 1971.

"You surrender or we wipe you out."

—Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, 13 December 1971



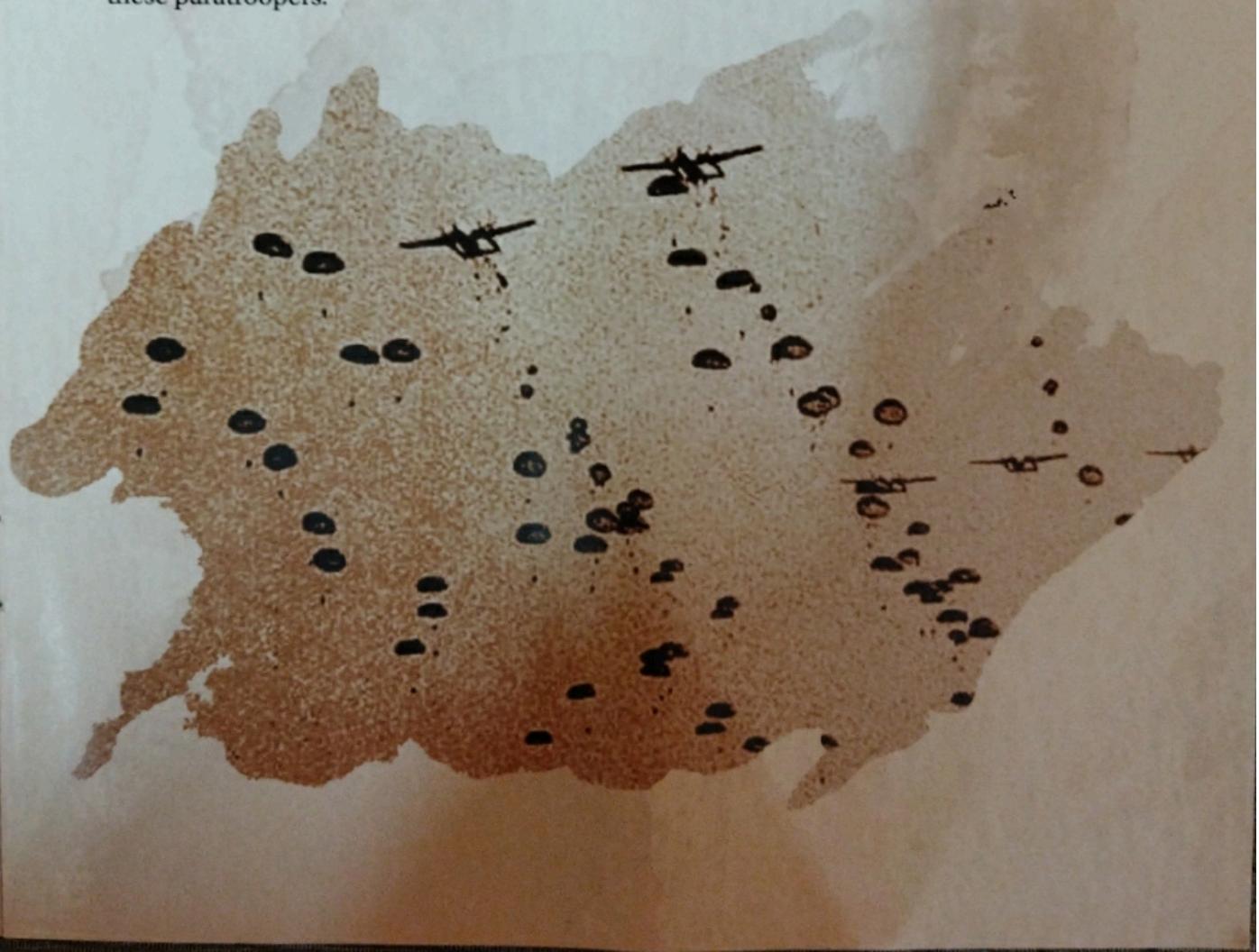
On the evening of 03 December 1971 at 5.45 p.m., Pakistan launched a pre-emptive air strike at Indian airfields of Amritsar, Srinagar, Awanpur, Pathankot, Uttarlai, Jodhpur, Ambala and Agra. India was fully geared up to respond and went into action the same night. The Indian Air Force continued operations at an unprecedented pace of over 500 sorties per day. As the Indian Army progressed forward in the East Pakistan, the Indian Air Force continued with its attacks against Pakistani targets as the campaign developed into a series of anti-airfield, anti-radar and close-support attacks by fighter jets with night attacks against airfields and strategic targets by MiG-21s, Canberras and An-12s.

Transport and Airlift operations were handled by three C-47 Dakota Sqns, two Antonov-12, one DHC-4 Caribou, one DHC-3 Otter and one C-119 Packet Sqn augmented from Western, Central and Eastern Commands and based at Jorhat, Guwahati, Barrackpur and Dum Dum during 03 to 16 December 1971.

TANGAIL PARA DROP

Tangail Airdrop was a successful battalion size forces' paratroopers operation mounted on 11 December 1971 by the 2nd Battalion (Special Operations) of the Indian Army's Parachute Regiment during the Indo-Pak War of 1971. The main objective of the operation was the capture of Poongli Bridge which would cut off the Pakistani 93 Brigade retreating from Mymensingh in the north to defend Dhaka, and its approaches.

This operation involved several An-12s, C-119s, 2 Caribous and Dakotas from various squadrons paradropping 700 troops of the 2nd para battalion near Tangail about 15 km north of Dhaka. Gnats from No. 22 Squadron provided top cover for the operation. The Pakistani troops suffered heavy losses during encounters with these paratroopers.





ATTACK ON GOVERNOR HOUSE

On the morning of 14 December, a message was intercepted by Indian Intelligence, concerning a high-level meeting of the civilian administration in East Pakistan. A decision was then made to mount an attack. Within 15 minutes of the interception of the message, a strike was launched against Dhaka. Armed with tourist guide maps of the city, four MiG-21s of 28 Sqn became airborne. Only a few minutes had passed after the meeting had started when the IAF aircraft blasted the Governor House with 57 mm. rockets, ripping the massive roof off the main hall and turning the building into a smoldering wreck. Mr. A. H. Malik, the Governor of East Pakistan, was so shocked after the incident that he resigned on the spot by writing his resignation on a piece of paper, thereby renouncing all ties with the West Pakistani administration.

Innovation was also displayed during the war whereby An-12 and Caribou aircraft were effectively used as carpet bombers in support of the Indian Army.

Mi-4 helicopters of the IAF were also exclusively used in air bridging obstacles destroyed by the enemy. They airlifted nearly 4,000 troops with supporting arms and equipment across river obstacles at Nursingdi, Baldya Bazaar, Raipur and Sylhet, greatly assisting the encirclement of Dhaka.

Hunters and Canberras were used for targeting and bombing bulk oil installations, Attock refinery, power house at Mangla Hydel Power Station Dam, Sui gas plant and attacking Karachi harbour.

The December 1971 war also witnessed the gaining of India's highest award for gallantry to the IAF. Flying Officer Nirmaljit Singh Sekhon, flying Gnats with No. 18 Squadron from Srinagar secured hits on one PAF Sabre and damaged another. He was posthumously awarded the Param Vir Chakra.



INDIAN ARMY LAND OPERATIONS



The Indian Army fought the war both on the Eastern and the Western fronts. India adopted aggressive strategy on the Eastern front and a defensive strategy on the Western front.

The Indian Army defeated four divisions and 30,000 para-military forces of the Pakistani Army in the thirteen days' war on the Eastern front. 3 Corps and 101 Communication Zone Area of the Indian Army participated in this war.

One of the major battles fought in this sector was the Battle of Hilli or the Battle of Bogura. It is regarded as the most severely pitched battle that occurred during this war. The action took place between 23 November and 11 December 1971, although the final surrender took place on 18 December 1971. The main objective was to control Bogura, thereby cutting off Pakistani forces in the north from the rest of East Pakistan.

On the Western front, the main battles were fought in the Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab and Rajasthan sectors.

In Punjab sector an important battle was fought in the Shakargarh area. It started on the evening of 05 December 1971. Three Army Divisions comprising of 54, 36 and 39 Divs launched an offensive between Basantar and Ravi rivers to break the enemy's concentration. The Battle of Basantar witnessed 54 Div succeeding in establishing a bridgehead across river Basantar. Second Lieutenant Arun Khetrapal distinguished himself in this battle and was awarded the highest gallantry award of Param Vir Chakra, posthumously.

In the Jammu and Kashmir sector, Pakistan launched an offensive on 03 December 1971 with an attack on Poonch that fizzled out within next three days. In Kargil, 121 Infantry Brigade captured the Pakistan out posts located at high altitudes. The most fierce attack came in Chhamb which was thwarted.



"No sir. I will not abandon my tank. My gun is still working and I will get them."

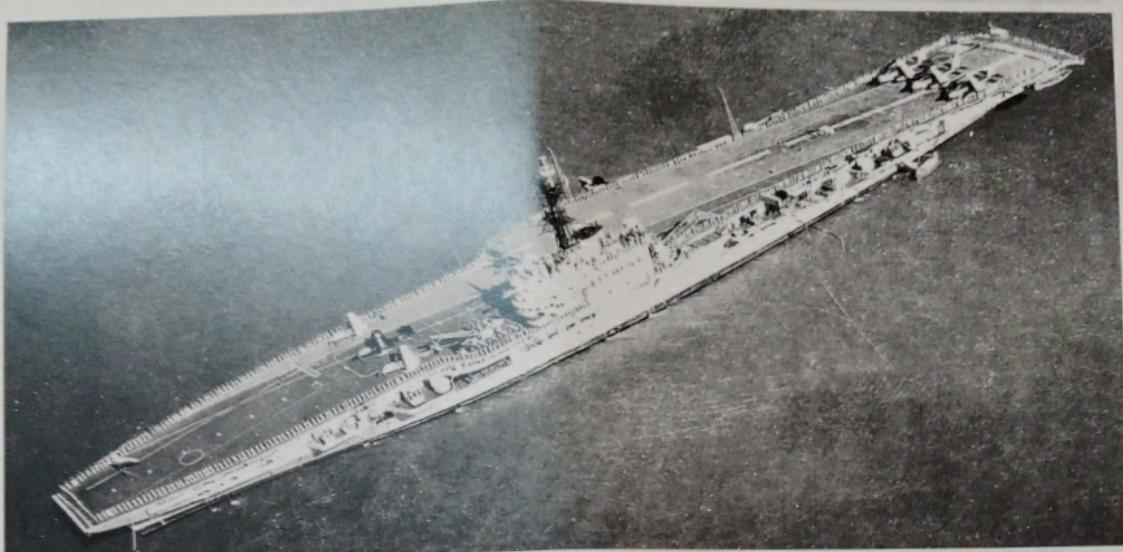
—2nd Lt Arun Khetrapal, PVC



One of the major engagements in the Western sector was fought between the assaulting Pakistani forces and Indian defenders at the Indian border post of Longewala in the Thar desert of Rajasthan sector. The Battle of Longewala was fought from 04 December to 07 December 1971.

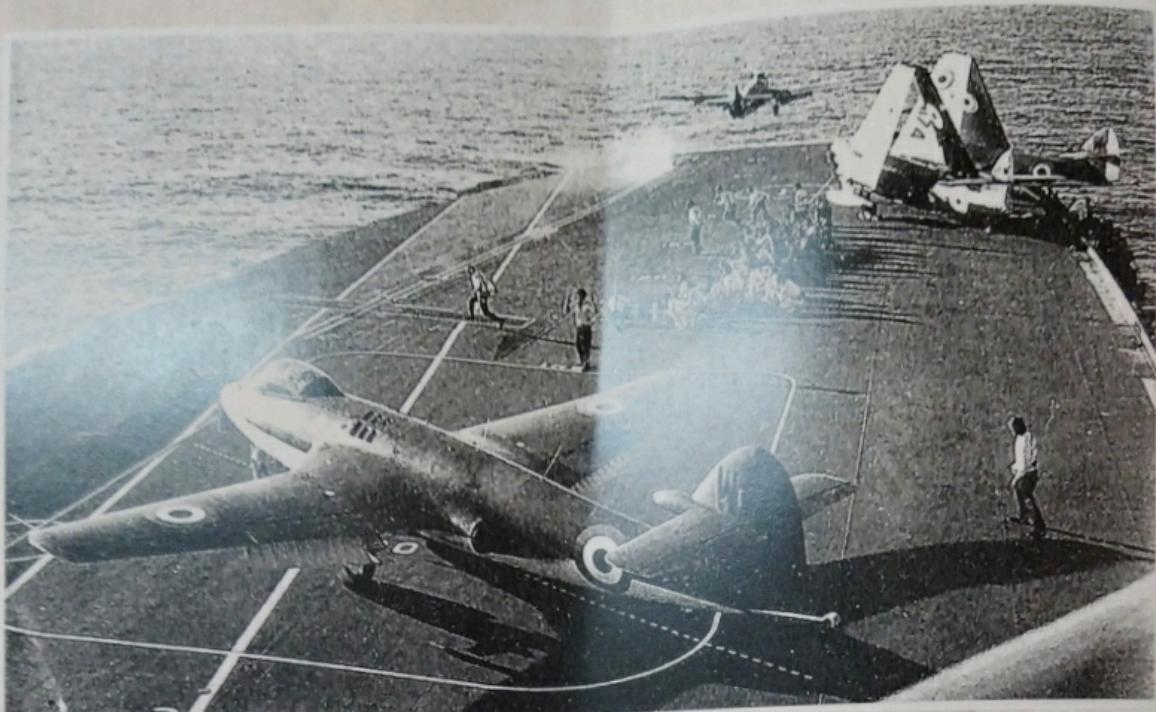
The IAF lost no time in engaging the T-59 tanks advancing towards Longewala post by sending four Hunter fighter aircraft to carry out repeated strikes. By evening, Longewala had turned into a tank graveyard, littered with nearly 37 Pakistani tanks burning or damaged and scattered in this belt.

INDIAN NAVY MARITIME OPERATIONS



The Indian Naval offensive started on the morning of 04 December 1971 with Operation Trident that comprised of the first missile attack on Karachi harbour by Indian Naval Ships Kiltan, Katchall, Nipat, Nirghat and Veer. This operation was also a watershed in ingenuity and strategic thinking.

In its maiden missile boat operation after independence, the Indian Navy destroyed and sank PNS Khyber, PNS Muhafiz and merchant vessel MV-Venus Challenger.



The Indian Navy launched Operation Python, comprising of missile attacks on oil field at Karachi by Indian Naval Ships Trishul, Talwar and Vinash on the intervening night of 08-09 December 1971. With this attack, Pakistan's fuel reserves were affected.

One of the major joint amphibious operations that was undertaken during the war was Operation Beaver. On 15 December 1971, an amphibious landing was carried out at Cox's Bazaar by two Indian Landing Ship Tanks - INS Gharial and INS Guldar.

The 1971 war also witnessed the sinking of PNS Ghazi, a Pakistani submarine deployed off Visakhapatnam to destroy INS Vikrant.

The Indian Naval task force comprised of INS Vikrant, Indian Naval frigates Brahmaputra and Beas, as well as its potent air assets - Sea Hawks and Alizes. The aircraft carrier operating in Bay of Bengal completely cut off the sea access of East Pakistan.

Maritime Dominance was achieved in entire Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal.

KEY MILESTONES



03 DECEMBER 1971

Pre-emptive strikes by PAF aircraft on Indian Air Bases.

04 DECEMBER 1971

IAF attacks enemy airfields and radar stations. IAF aircraft bomb Karachi harbour and set fire to Bulk Petroleum installations. Navy launches Ops Trident and attacks Karachi harbour sinking three enemy ships.



05 DECEMBER 1971

IAF Hunters rout Pakistani armoured offensive. 27 enemy tanks were destroyed and 10 damaged along with scores of trucks on the sands of Longewala.

07 DECEMBER 1971

Special Heliborne Operation commences to transport troops to Sylhet over rivers and rivulets in east Pakistan between 07-15 December.



09 DECEMBER 1971

Naval Headquarters announces sinking of Pakistani submarine Ghazi on the intervening night of 03 and 04 December.

11 DECEMBER 1971

Para drop of para battalion group north of Tangail by 48 Transport aircraft of Indian Air Force.



14 DECEMBER 1971

Four MiG-21s and Four Hunters carried out rocket attack on Governor's house in East Pakistan.

16 DECEMBER 1971

The Joint Operations by the Three Indian Armed Forces shattered the morale of Pakistani Armed Forces resulting in victory of India.



REMEMBERING 1971



The defining characteristic of the 1971 war was the coordination and cooperation achieved amongst the three arms of India's Defence Forces. India won a glorious victory. This, more than anything else, made the lightning campaign leading to the liberation of Bangladesh, look so effortless.

Three Chiefs of India's Defence Forces, General Sam Manekshaw, Admiral SM Nanda and Air Chief Marshal PC Lal after the brilliant victory in December 1971.

1971 war is an epitome of jointmanship whereby the purple spirit was exhibited in all its hues. This war is also an example of media engagement whereby both national and international media played a key role. And... the result was one of the most significant victories in the modern era, and the birth of a new nation, Bangladesh.



"If you lose don't come back, you will have disgraced the country and the country won't accept you."

—Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw

LEST WE FORGET



(L-R) Field Marshal SHFJ Manekshaw, MC, Admiral SM Nanda PVSM, AVSM and Air Chief Marshal PC Lal, DFC



(Above)
MI-4 helicopter, which participated in Operation Kilo Flight in 1971.

(Far left)
Swarnim Vijay Mashaal in front of Gateway of India, Mumbai.

(Left)
Swarnim Vijay Mashaal in Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

As part of the golden jubilee commemorations of victory in 1971 war, 'Swarnim Vijay Mashaal' was lit from the eternal flame at National War Memorial by the Honourable Prime Minister on 16 December 2020 to mark the beginning of celebrations. Four victory mashaals were carried to various parts of India, including villages of the PVC and MVC awardees.



(Above)
Lt Gen AAK Niazi, Martial Law Administrator of East Pakistan, signing the Instrument of Surrender under the gaze of Lt Gen JS Aurora (left), General Commander of the Indian and Bangladeshi Forces on 16 December 1971.



(Middle)
Three Chiefs of India's Defence Forces, Air Chief Marshal PC Lal, Admiral SM Nanda and General Sam Manekshaw.



(Bottom)
Field Marshal Manekshaw interacting with a soldier.



"Today, on the occasion of Vijay Diwas, I salute the valour and bravery of the Indian Army. I remember the bravery of our soldiers who wrote a new saga of bravery in the 1971 war. Their sacrifice is a source of inspiration for all Indians. Nation will always revere them."

—Shri Rajnath Singh, Minister of Defence



SALUTE TO THE ETERNAL FLAME



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