

**PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU (DEFENCE WING)
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‘हर काम देश के नाम’

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8th Armed Forces Veterans’ Day: Wreath Laying ceremonies & Ex-Servicemen Rallies being held at multiple locations across the country

Raksha Mantri leads the celebrations with an event in Kanpur attended by around 1,000 veterans

Govt committed to the welfare of ex-servicemen; As the nation is progressing, more efforts are being made: Shri Rajnath Singh

“It is the nation’s collective responsibility to treat the soldiers & their dependents as its own family & ensure that it stands with them always”

8th Armed Forces Veterans’ Day is being celebrated on January 14, 2024 at multiple locations pan India to pay respects to the ex-servicemen for their selfless duty & sacrifices and reinforce solidarity towards the Next of Kin of these bravehearts. Wreath Laying ceremonies and Veterans’ Rallies are being organised in Srinagar, Pathankot, Delhi, Kanpur, Alwar, Jodhpur, Guwahati, Mumbai, Secunderabad, Kochi and several other places to mark the day.

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh led the celebrations by addressing a Veterans’ Rally at Air Force Station, Kanpur. Around 1,000 ex-servicemen attended the event. The Raksha Mantri interacted with them and expressed heartfelt gratitude to the heroes for their self-less service to the motherland. He emphasised that the veterans hold a special place in the heart of every Indian. “Our soldiers rise above family, caste & creed and only think about the nation. They effectively carry out their duties as they know for a fact that if the nation is secure, everything is safe. This gives them the moral strength to face every challenge,” he added.

Shri Rajnath Singh reasserted the unwavering commitment of Ministry of Defence towards the welfare of ex-servicemen, stating that from implementing the One Rank One Pension scheme to providing health care and re-employment, the Government led by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has been leaving no stone unturned to ensure the well-being of the veterans. He added that while the Government is making more efforts

as the nation is progressing, it is also a collective responsibility of the people to treat the soldiers & their dependents as their own family and ensure that they stand with them always. He appealed to the people to further strengthen their will to honour the retired as well as the serving soldiers.

The Raksha Mantri pointed out that the bravery, integrity, professional & humanity of the Indian soldiers is respected and recognised not just by the whole country, but by the entire world. "The bravery of our soldiers who fought in the First & Second World Wars are remembered with respect across the globe. We, Indians, too not only respect our own soldiers, but also those of other countries. In this 1971 war, more than 90,000 soldiers of Pakistan surrendered to India. We could have treated them in any way we wanted; but such is our culture and tradition that we adopted a completely humanitarian attitude and sent them back to their country with full respect. Such treatment to enemy soldiers is one of the golden chapters of humanity," he said.

On the occasion, the Raksha Mantri laid a wreath at the War Memorial and paid homage to the heroes for their supreme sacrifice and dedicated service. Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan, Air Officer Commanding in Chief, Maintenance Command Air Marshal Vibhas Pande and Air Officer Commanding, Air Force Station, Kanpur Air Commodore MK Praveen were among the dignitaries present on the occasion.

Rajya Raksha Mantri Shri Ajay Bhatt will attend the event at Secunderabad later in the day. The event in New Delhi was attended by Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari, Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral R Hari Kumar, Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to the Chairman, Chiefs of Staff Committee (CISC) Lt Gen JP Mathew, Deputy Chief of Army Staff (Strategy) and Joint Secretary, Ex-Serviceman Welfare (ESW) along with other senior officers of the Armed Forces. Veterans and representatives of various Ex-Serviceman organisations also graced the occasion. Speaking on the occasion, the Service Chiefs highlighted the important welfare measures undertaken by various agencies of the Armed Forces dealing with Veterans. They praised the Ex-Servicemen for their selfless service in Nation Building.

The Chief of the Air Staff acknowledged the contributions of the veterans whose resilient spirit, leadership and vision laid the foundation of today's Indian Air Force (IAF). He informed that nearly 1.85 lakh IAF pensioners have been migrated on the System for Pension Administration-Raksha (SPARSH) platform, a web-based integrated system in place for sanction & disbursement of defence pension. He added that as a part of 'Service at Doorstep' concept, SPARSH Service Centres established at every Air Force station have been helping the veterans in addressing issues in a more effective and comprehensive manner.

The Chief of the Naval Staff stated that the Navy has been following a multi-pronged approach through proactive outreach, positive interactions and persistent communication to address various issues faced by the veteran community. He added that the ongoing outreach initiatives through established mechanisms and fora like the Directorate of Ex-servicemen Affairs, Naval Regimental System, Navy Foundation,

Veteran Sailors' Forum, Pension Adalat have been strengthened and expanded to cover widows and Next of Kin of the fallen heroes, in addition to retired personnel and their families. He pointed out that, last year, the Navy conducted 58 such outreach programmes at various locations including Leh, Ladakh and North Eastern states. "We are privileged to have the continuing benefit of your experience and wisdom. We look forward to your invaluable guidance, unstinting support and forthright suggestions to help us better address issues faced by the Services and the veteran community," he said.

The 'We for Veterans' anthem was played at various public places as an ode to the Veterans community. The celebrations also witnessed the release of maiden 'SAGAR SAMVAD' magazine, a yearly journal published by Directorate of Ex-Servicemen Affairs of the Indian Navy covering information, policies and various topics of interest for the Veterans. The Indian Air Force and Indian Army also released the 'VAYU SAMVEDNA' and 'SAMMAN' magazines respectively.

Armed Forces Veterans' Day is celebrated on 14th January every year to recognise the service rendered by the First Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces Field Marshal KM Cariappa, who retired on this day in 1953. The day was first celebrated in 2016 and it is commemorated every year since by hosting such interactive events in the honour of the Ex-Servicemen.

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