

# HOW COAST GUARD CONDUCTED A HISTORIC OPERATION OFF THE COAST OF SRI LANKA

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By Ashish Singh

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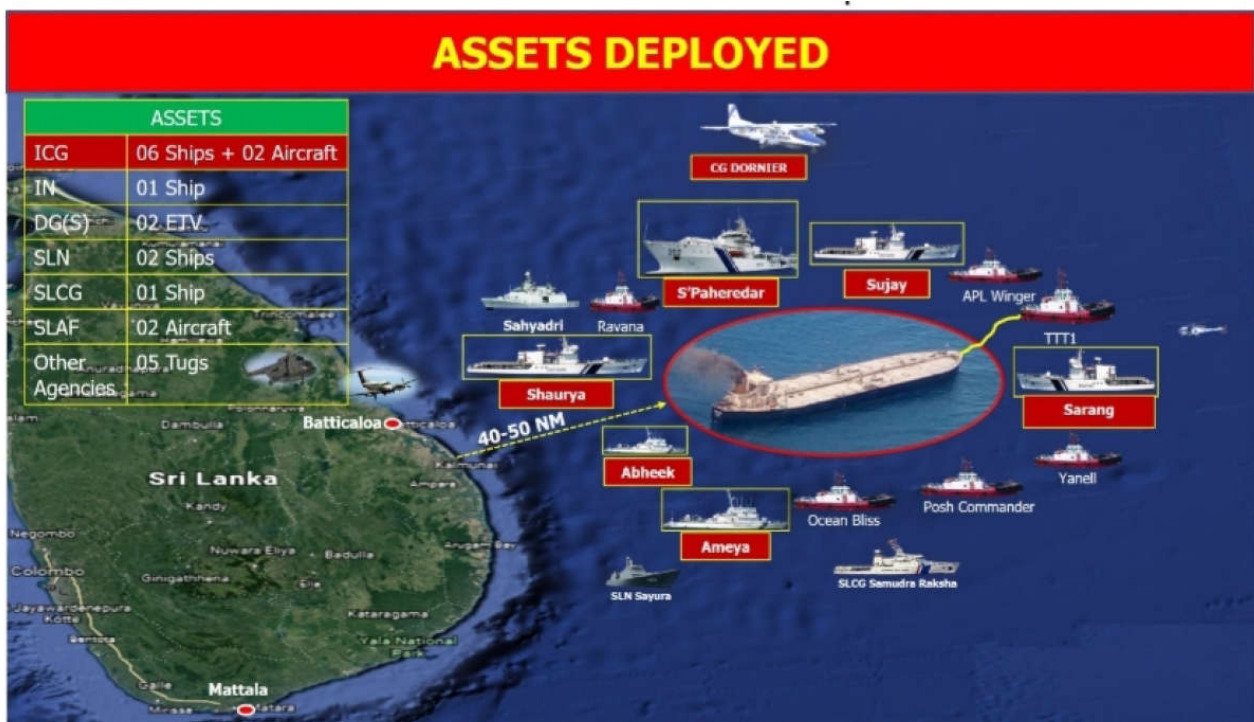


The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) created yet another maritime history of a kind by responding and coordinating a major firefighting operation onboard Very Large Crude Carrier (VLCC) 'MT New Diamond' wherein the entire highly inflammable cargo 'Kuwait Export Crude' was protected despite raging fire and intermittent explosions. The ICG spearheaded a perilous fire-fighting operation that lasted over 7 days, in dousing an intense fire onboard the 333-metre-long oil tanker off the Sri Lankan east coast, carrying about 3 lakh metric tonne of crude oil (Category 1 inflammable liquid), thus averting a serious disaster in the region which otherwise would have threatened the bio-diversified marine environment off Sri Lanka, Maldives and southern India. Comparing with the recent oil-spill mishap of 1,000 tonne Bunker Oil from MV Wakashio witnessed off Mauritius in August 2020 that led to declaration of National Emergency by the island nation, the quantum of crude in this incident was 270-times more voluminous. It is left to imagination that how devastating an oil spill off this high magnitude would have been for the region.



**SPECIALISED ICG VESSEL IN ACTION**





MT New Diamond, a Panama flagged vessel with 23 crew, was on passage from Kuwait to India (Paradip Port), reported fire due to boiler explosion aboard on the morning of 3 September about 40NM (approximately 70 km) of Tirrukkovil (south-east off Sri Lankan coast). The distress message was picked up by Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC), Colombo and by MRCC Mumbai. The Sri Lankan government, post assessing the situation, requested immediate support of India through Indian High Commission in Sri Lanka.

Indian Coast Guard is the authority for National Maritime Search & Rescue (NMSAR), National Coordinating authority for oil spill response in Indian waters and Competent National Authority under the regional South Asian Co-operative Environment Program (SACEP) for responding and coordinating marine pollution response in South Asian Sea region. The SACEP Sri Lanka, sought assistance of ICG, as the threat of oil spill to the entire region was imminent to conduct rescue and fire fighting operation on the ill-fated tanker, including pollution response operation, India being a signatory to the regional association mechanism.

A multi-mission capable Offshore Patrol Vessel ICGS Shaurya, on preventive deployment off Tamil Nadu coast, immediately diverted and was the first ship to arrive at the “Golden Hour” on scene to commence fire fighting by afternoon on same day. The night of 3rd Sep witnessed one more blast onboard Motor Tanker and ICGS Shaurya continued her effort to keep the fire under control. Meanwhile, a joint effort by MRCC of ICG and Sri Lanka Navy had ensured rescue of 22 of the 23 crew by alerting nearest ships in vicinity. The timely and daring firefighting efforts by ICGS Shaurya was the game changer and ensured that the fire remain contained within the bridge and accommodation area. If not, the fire would have spread to the cargo hold carrying huge volume of crude, resulting in explosions and consequent catastrophic environmental disaster.

By 4 September morning, six ICG ships, including specialist Pollution Response Vessel, augmented initial response and two Dornier aircraft were pressed in action to operate from Sri Lankan soils for logistics & pollution response. ICG Ships utilised sophisticated special-fit External Fire Fighting (EFF) system to spray foam compound for smothering the oil fire. In addition to ICG ships, Sri Lankan tugs Ravana, Vishaba and ALP Winger, also joined on 4 September and commenced fire fighting.

While the collective fire-fighting was underway, the adrift distressed vessel was moving towards Sri Lanka coast due to the prevailing seasonal currents in area, posing an immediate threat of grounding and resultant oil spill once near depths of 20 metres. Indian Coast Guard boarding team, in a high risk operation braving the rough seas and adverse conditions, embarked the under fire unmanned tanker and successfully connected the tow to Sri Lankan Tug TTT-1 to pull it away from land and position favourably into the wind to prevent spread of fire to the forward section of the ship. This move was crucial turning point of the operation that ensured saving cargo of the oil tanker as also averting major oil spill in the region.

With intense and persistent firefighting attack for three days by ICG Ships along with Sri Lankan ships and tugs, coming within 50 metres of a potentially huge explosive seat, the fire got doused by 6 September morning. ICG ships, however, continued to monitor the situation, in case of re-eruption due to prevalent temperature and undertook surface-boundary cooling to reduce it around the cargo holds.

As estimation of a likelihood of reoccurrence, a huge explosion again occurred on the starboard diesel oil tank on 6 September afternoon and by midnight, huge flames reaching up to 60 metre height from the deck were seen at the rear part of the ship. All units scaled up from boundary cooling to firefighting and as a result of yet again sustained

and close quarter efforts by 4 ICG Ships and 2 Sri Lankan and 3 salvor tugs, the fire was completely doused again by 8 September afternoon. Notwithstanding, continuous boundary cooling with sea water was maintained to reduce temperature of the ship's structure. As a result of two major explosions of fuel oil tanks, the deck and hull on port and starboard side got ruptured. This led to escape of oil water emulsion from engine room to sea and formation of minor oil sheen.

On 9 September, ICG Dornier aircraft which was preemptively positioned at Sri Lankan air base (Mattala) was launched in pollution response configuration for spray of Oil Spill Dispersant (OSD) to neutralise the sheen. Simultaneously, ICG ships in area also sprayed OSD and churned the waters for kinetic action and to accelerate the disintegration of the oil sheen. Under no circumstances, the major cargo tanks were breached nor the Kuwait export crude escaped to sea. A major mile stone was achieved by preventing the oil spill during the entire operation. Had there been an oil spill of such high magnitude, the fisheries and livelihood of fishermen of the entire region would have been severely impacted.

The collective surface firefighting efforts was supplemented by aerial dropping of Dry Chemical Powder (DCP), a fire-fighting substance, by Sri Lankan Air Force. Further, Sri Lankan Naval authorities sought ICG support for five tonne DCP for firefighting which was sourced from M/s IOC, Chennai and airlifted to Trincomalee. The salvage team hired by the owner which arrived on 6Sep aligned with ICG plan and approach for the firefighting operation.

The salvage team boarded the vessel on 9 Sep 20 and assessed no hotspots, flames/smoke with no breach of cargo tanks. Naval architect in salvage team confirmed that the ship's stability remained within the safe zone. Indian Coast Guard continued to closely monitor the situation even after the salvage team took over control of the ship. Post declaration by the salvor that the casualty vessel is safe as also upon receipt of information from the Sri Lankan authorities through HCI in Sri Lanka, the ICG units were withdrawn from the scene on 10 Sep.

The large scale, professional and proactive efforts of ICG have been appreciated at the international level by the government and the armed forces of Sri Lanka as also by former President of the Maldives. A major ecological disaster was averted in India's backyard by joint efforts of Indian Coast Guard, Sri Lankan armed forces and tugs deployed by Sri Lankan naval authorities and DG (Shipping). The incident response also highlighted close co-operation and inter-operability with forces of our immediate neighbours in all together a new dimension, invoking the established MoU between the two nations.

This operation has brought to fore the lead role played by India and the capability of ICG to respond to an emerging situation to protect the maritime environment in living up to its motto of "Vayam Rakshamah" (We Protect).

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## Defence

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# ANIL KUMAR HARBOLA IS THE NEW COMMANDER OF COAST GUARD NORTH WEST REGION

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By

[Ashish Singh](#)



Inspector General Anil Kumar Harbola assumed the command of Indian Coast Guard Region (North West) at Gandhinagar. The Flag Officer joined the service in Jan 1989. Having completed his abinitio military training from Indian Naval Academy, he later specialised in 'Naval Communication'. Over the years in the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), he



has served approximately 16 years in sea going appointments in almost all the types of ships held with ICG. Prior to assuming the present assignment, he was serving as Coast Guard Commander for North-East region at Kolkata.



Inspector General Anil Kumar Harbola has commanded four coast guard ships namely Sangram, Varad, Tarabai and Hovercraft H-182, when these armed amphibious platforms were initially inducted into Indian Coast Guard. In 1998, the officer while commanding Coast Guard Ship Tarabai, apprehended hijacked Japanese merchant vessel 'Alondra Rainbow' along with hijackers after chasing the vessel for almost 750 kms in the Arabian

sea. He was awarded 'Tatrakshak Medal' (TM) for 'Gallantry' by the Hon'ble President of India for the same. His important appointments ashore include coast guard commander for Maharashtra and that for Andhra Pradesh, Chief of staff at CG region (A&N) at Port Blair, Chief Staff Officer (Pers & Adm) at Regional Headquarters Mumbai, Joint Director of communication and recruitment Coast Guard Headquarters, New Delhi and Coast Guard Advisor (CGA) to the Director General of Indian Coast Guard (DGICG). He has also been commended by the DGICG. A silver medalist in Physics from Kumaun University, Nainital, he also holds Master's degree in Management Studies from Osmania University and that in Security and Strategic Studies from Madras University. The officer is an alumnus of the US Coast Guard's International Maritime Officers' School, York Town, Virginia, College of Defence Management, Secunderabad and that of National Defence College New Delhi. He is also a qualified Interviewing Officer (IO) from Defence Institute of Psychological Research (DIPR), New Delhi.

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## **Defence**

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### **CDS GEN BIPIN RAWAT VISITS FORWARD AREAS IN CENTRAL SECTOR AND HQ WESTERN COMMAND**

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The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), General Bipin Rawat visited forward areas along the Line of Actual Control in the Central Sector in Himachal Pradesh along with GOC, Uttar Bharat Area on Tuesday. On arrival at the forward most post in Sumdoh Sub-Sector, the CDS was briefed about the operational preparedness of its own forces towards safeguarding the territorial integrity of the nation. The CDS interacted extensively with the Indian Army, ITBP and GREF personnel deployed in the remote areas and appreciated their state of high morale. He encouraged all ranks to keep up the high state of alertness and professionalism displayed by them.





Later in the day, General Bipin Rawat visited the Headquarters of Western Command of Indian Army at Chandimandir where he reviewed the operational situation along the Western borders. The CDS commended the formation for their efforts to ensure force preservation and at the same time stepping forward to provide support in terms of establishing Covid hospitals at Chandigarh, Patiala, Faridabad, providing paramedical staff in aid of civil hospitals, assistance in vaccination of common citizens and revitalising oxygen plants at various places in the nation's fight against the pandemic. He stressed the need to focus on training hard and remain vigilant to thwart the nefarious designs of our adversaries. He emphasised that all ranks must keep themselves abreast with the latest trends in information technology, emerging cyber threats and countermeasures.

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## IAF CHIEF VISITS BANGLADESH

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Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhadauria, Chief of the Air Staff, was invited by his counterpart Air Marshal Shaikh Abdul Hannan, Chief of Air Staff, Bangladesh Air Force to review the Passing Out Parade and Commissioning Ceremony at Bangladesh Air Force Academy (BAFA) in Jashore as it was 'President Parade 2021' on Monday. The two-day visit was highly significant in view of the Golden Jubilee of the historic victory in the 1971 War for Liberation of Bangladesh. This occasion also marks the first instance when any foreign Chief was invited to review the Parade as the Chief Guest a re-affirmation of the strong bonds of friendship and trust between India and Bangladesh and their Armed Forces.









বাংলাদেশ বিমান বাহিনী একাডেমি বঙ্গবন্ধু কমপ্লেক্স

উদযোজন করেন

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকারের মন্ত্রণালয় প্রধান

শেখ হাসিনা

১০ জুনি ২০২১, ১০০তম জন্মদিন





While addressing the graduating trainees on parade, CAS complimented them for an excellent parade and noted the rapid progress being made in all aspects of military-level interactions, with bilateral defence cooperation has become an important pillar in the deep historical and fraternal ties between India and Bangladesh. The CAS described this event as a reflection of the excellent state of a professional relationship between the two Air Forces based on mutual trust and understanding. He expressed confidence that his presence in BAFA during this historic 50th year of the Liberation War would reinforce the already strong and multi-dimensional partnership between the two Nations.

During his stay in Bangladesh, The CAS held discussions with his host, the Chief of Air Staff Bangladesh Air Force as well as the Chief of Army Staff and Principal Staff Officer, Armed Forces Division; wherein matters of mutual interest and avenues to further strengthen the all-encompassing defence cooperation were discussed. He also interacted with the High Commissioner of India, Vikram K. Doraiswami during his stay in Dhaka.

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## **Defence**

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### **GRSE FOCUSES ON DEVELOPING INDIGENOUS CAPABILITIES IN BUILDING WARSHIPS**

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GRSE focused on developing indigenous capabilities in building warships for domestic consumption and exports, informs Rear Admiral V K Saxena, IN (Retd.), Chairman and Managing Director, Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers Ltd. He said this while addressing the industry at an interactive session on “Indigenisation Requirements of GRSE: Opportunities for MSMEs” organised by PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PHDCCI). Rear Adm V K Saxena opined that MSME has emerged as a sector for high employment generation, contribution to the GDP in the manufacturing and service sector. Due to the diligent efforts of the government, massive growth and development are happening in the defence sector and it will be interesting to watch out for those new initiatives that are going to help the industries particularly the MSMEs sector.



The image shows a webinar banner and a video call interface. The banner features the PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry logo and the text: "WEBINAR ON INDIGENISATION REQUIREMENTS OF GRSE - OPPORTUNITIES FOR MSMEs". The date and time are "Tuesday, 29th June 2021 | 11:00 am - 01:00 pm". The video call interface shows several participants in a grid, with a large video of a speaker in the top right. Below the video call, there are logos for the Title Partner, Associate Partner, Diamond Sponsors, Platinum Sponsors, Gold Sponsors, and Silver Sponsor.

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He deliberated that due to recent policy initiatives undertaken by the Government of India, initiatives, like Make in India, Self-Reliant India, and Vocal for Local, are giving confidence towards the future of the defence sectors. Initiatives like putting a lot of items in the negative lists and others are a good sign for the domestic defence industry that has helped to shorten the procurement process and make new chapters. The increase in the FDI limit and thrust on export has given a major push to this sector. Talking about the shipbuilding and war shipbuilding sector, Rear Adm V K Saxena mentioned that MSMEs are playing a pivotal role with the majority of the work done by the MSMEs right away from supplying the materials, which makes 70% of the shipbuilding procurement, to the services.. Shipbuilding is a mother industry that has a multiplying effect on the growth of the sector giving direct and indirect employment to many people. In GRSE, a very significant part of the procurement is done through MSMEs and more than 65 items are put in the mandatory procurement list from MSMEs. He also added that we should have more and more competitive vendors to develop more reliable and technologically developed products.



GRSE has been very keen to work together with the MSMEs for the development of niche technology and products provided the MSMEs assure timely supply. GRSE needs a strong vendor ecosystem within the country to bid for international projects. It is quite keen to build a strong war shipbuilding ecosystem within the country with the help of the serious indigenous manufacturers. Cdr Ravi Sharma. IN (Retd), DGM, GRSE in his technical presentation on Indigenisation gave an overview about the indigenisation of ship systems and a glimpse of the GRSE indigenisation effort. He also discussed the major and minor indigenisation requirements and the approach path for the future which included identification of strength for indigenisation and requirements; quantum of indigenisation with an overall objective of cost-saving through import substitution; exploration of partnership for self-development and standardise and demonstrate proof of performance by trials, among others.

Harihar Das, DGM, GRSE in his technical presentation on vendor development discussed the vendor management initiatives undertaken by GRSE with a preference given to MSMEs, UDYAM, GeM, e-TReDs and gave a detailed deliberation on the GRSE registration procedure. Pradeep Multani, Senior Vice President, PHDCCI deliberated about the importance of making the defence sector self-reliant with the help of indigenisation which has the capability of developing and producing any defence equipment within the country for the dual purpose of achieving self-reliance and reducing the burden of imports. Multani mentioned that self-reliance in defence manufacturing is one of the objectives of the Department of Defence Production. As far as indigenisation is concerned, we have to take the first important step wherein we have the in-house capability to manufacture the materials, components, and assemblies. As part of Make In India initiatives of the Ministry of Defence through Indigenisation Efforts, GRSE has made commendable progress by successfully incorporating a high percentage of indigenous content into their ships.

The session was moderated by Vivek Seigell, Assistant Secretary-General, PHDCCI with numerous technical questions coming from the participating MSMEs. A Vote of Thanks was also presented by Seigell.

The Webinar was attended by many industry stalwarts. The Webinar was supported by GRSE and Star Wire India Ltd. PHDCCI's Session has also been supported by the Annual Sponsors DLF India; Multani Pharmaceuticals; UFLEX; JK Tyre & Industries; Marble City; Paramount Cables; SMC Investments and Advisors; Blossom Kochhar Aroma Magic; Comtech Interior; DCM Shriram Industries; Radico Khaitan; Ajit Industries; Synergy Environics; Timberworkz; P S Bedi & Co Pvt Ltd; and IFFCO.

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## **ARMY'S SHATRUJEET BRIGADE CONDUCTS EXERCISE 'MAROO STRIKE'**

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**NEW DELHI:** To send a strong signal to China and Pakistan, the Shatrujeet Brigade of Indian Army conducted an Airborne Exercise to validate its Rapid Response Capability. The exercise was preceded by a series of intense preparation involving joint planning & integration between the Indian Army and Indian Airforce elements taking part in the exercise.







The exercise entailed para drop of paratroopers and combat heavy loads including vehicle mounted anti tank and air defence missiles detachments over a designated target area from C-130 & AN 32 aircrafts. The exercise also validated 72 hours of intense integrated battle drills involving mechanised forces demonstrating clockwise precision & seamless integration between Airborne, Mechanised & Airforce. Exercise 'Maroo Strike' also establishes the rapidly developing integration among the Indian Armed forces, the Army and Air Force, in this case.

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### **50 YEARS OF 1971 INDIA-PAKISTAN WAR: VICTORY FLAME ENTERS J&K'S KUPWARA**

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By

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The 'Swarnim Vijay Varsh Victory Mashaal', symbolic of India's 1971 War Victory reached North Kashmir's "Vilgam" of border district of Kupwara. It was given a grand reception at Vilgam to commemorate 50 Years of India's victory over Pakistan in the epic war of 1971. To commemorate the 50th anniversary of Indian Armed Forces Victory in the 1971 Indo-Pak War, the year 2021 is being celebrated as 'Swarnim Vijay Varsh'. As part of the year-long Swarnim Vijay Varsh Celebrations, Four Victory Flames were lit by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi at National War Memorial on 16 December last year, which were sent to four cardinal directions.

One of the Victory Flames traveling due North was brought to 15 Rashtriya Rifles, Vilgam from Headquarter 8 Sector, Charkoot as part of its last lap in CIF (K). The Victory Flame was received with tremendous fervour by the civilians at the Champora Bridge and a Motor Bike Rally by local youth ushered it throughout the route towards Vilgam via Dhama. The Victory Flame was brought to the Main Gate of 15 Rashtriya Rifles at Vilgam and handed over for mile long Victory Run by National Level Sportspersons towards the celebration area. At the last stretch of the run, the Victory Flame was handed over to the War Veterans and was received by Commander Headquarter 8 Sector. A wreath laying ceremony with full honours and great ardours by War Veterans and Commander Headquarter 8 Sector was performed at the Victory Flame.

The ceremony was witnessed by a large number of Ex-servicemen, children and various civil dignitaries of the area. The celebration consisted of cultural programme including performance of Kashmiri dance by local dance group, patriotic song by school children and a mesmerising battle depiction of 'Op Gazab', which was fought at Tangdhar Sector by Indian Troops was also recreated towards the end of the event which totally enthralled the audience. Last but not the least was 'Khukri Dance' performed by ferocious looking Gorkha Soldiers which took the audience by awe. The War Veterans were felicitated by Commander 8 Sector in recognition of their valuable sacrifices and in achieving the glorious victory in the 1971 Indo-Pak War. The emotions of patriotism were running high

and the chanting of Bharat Mata Ki Jai was filled all over the place. The Victory Flame was later escorted for the Night Halt at 15 Rashtriya Rifles Quarter Guard. On 27 June 2021, the 'Victory Flame' was bid adieu for 59 Medium Regiment Aegis, 19 Artillery Brigade for further celebrations. Speaking to the media the Ex war veterans expressed their gratitude to prime minister and Army who made this event possible to remember their sacrifices.

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