

## MARCH OF MIGHT & COLOURS

# On a warm sunny day, India showcases its military prowess and cultural diversity at the 62nd Republic Day parade at Rajpath

**TIMES NEWS NETWORK**

Sixty-one years of India's cultural and military might were celebrated amid much enthusiasm on Wednesday with thousands of people gathering at the India Gate lawns to become a part of the Republic day parade.

The myriad hues of the country's diversity shown in tableaux, vibrant performances by students and armed forces in full battle regalia enveloped the city with a feeling of grandeur and pride. The 62nd Republic Day had Indonesian President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono as chief guest, who is the second Indonesian chief guest to grace the occasion after Sukarno in 1950 when India celebrated its first Republic Day.

Marching down from the Raisina Hills to Red Fort, the parade showcased India's military might as enthusiastic spectators along the route cheered the marching contingents and the mechanised columns. The synchronised military and police contingents marched proudly to the lilting tunes of bands through Rajpath where President and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Pratibha Patil took the salute. The march-past was also watched by the Vice-President Hamid Ansari, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, Defence Minister A K Antony and the country's political and military brass.

The President also awarded the winners of the Param Vir Chakra and Ashok Chakra and mounted columns of 61 Cavalry. An Army doctor, Major Laishram Jyotin Singh, was awarded posthumously the highest peacetime gallantry award — the Ashok Chakra — for his bravery while fighting militants during an attack on Indians in Kabul. He was the first Army doctor to receive the Ashok Chakra.

Minutes before the parade began, Singh, Antony and the chiefs of Army, Navy and Air Force laid wreaths at 'Amar Jawan Jyoti' (the flame of the immortal soldier) at India Gate. As the President unfurled the tricolour and took a customary 21-gun salute, four Mi-17 helicopters zoomed in from the skies and showered flower petals on spectators.

As the army showcased its impressive weaponry, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) brought the Active Phased Array Radar, which is a shipborne multi-function radar, and Naval Underwater Weapon System at the parade for the first time along with the trainer version of Light Combat Aircraft Tejas. Various army contingents including Punjab Regiment, Rajputana Rifles, Rajput Regiment, Sikh Light Infantry, Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry and Gorkha Rifles marched to the tunes of 'Gangotri', 'God of War', Pragati and 'Vir Bharat'.

In this year's parade, the number of tableaux rose to 23 from last year's 21 to provide a kaleidoscopic view of the vibrant cultural heritage. The showcasing of tableaux was followed by the gypsy ride of 21 children who won the national bravery amid a huge applause by the spectators. Around 686 schoolchildren also performed various dance forms and drew a good response from the viewers.

Once again, dare-devil performance from the Army motorcycle team 'Dare Devils' became the show-stealer when they performed back riding, border man salute, lotus formation, human pyramid and ladder balancing much to the amazement of the audiences. The spectacular parade ended with a flypast involving an elaborate display of skills by pilots who manoeuvred their jets to form a 'Chakra' and the Arrowhead. Three SU-30 MKIs later executed the Trishul manoeuvre.





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