

Spirit of freedom!

A Look At The Majestic Republic Day Parade, The Diamond Jubilee Way

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One of the oldest civilisations in the world, Bharat is a nation like no other. Its exceptionality, in this regard (and every other), stems from the assortment of traditions, religions, and social practices it boasts and venerates year after year. The Republic Day, observed each year on January 26 ever since the adoption of the Constitution in 1950, marks this spirit of diverse and independent India and is commemorated with great grandeur and pride. As we celebrate its 75th chapter, here's all you need to know but so far perhaps didn't.

Rajpath: the final destination

Contrary to popular belief, the Republic Day parade was not always held at Rajpath, New Delhi. From 1950 to 1954, it was instead held at the Irwin stadium, Kingsway, Red Fort, and the Ram Leela maidan, respectively. Rajpath was bequeathed the status of being its permanent venue in 1955.

Burn the midnight oil

Organising the parade is not a child's play, and so the arrangements for it begin from July of the preceding year. Participants are required to join the practice sessions every day at 3 am. They have, as such, already practiced for 600 hours before the final performance on January 26.

Pachees topo ki salaami

The 21-guns salute that takes place during the ceremony is not done using 21 canons but the 7 canons of the Indian Army, com-

monly called 25-Ponders, which are fired in a total of three rounds. An intriguing fact is that the time of the gun salute firing corresponds to the time at which the national anthem is played. The first firing takes place at the start of the national anthem and the last firing occurs right after 52 seconds.

The magical march past

18-24 different divisions of the Indian Army march past at the parade. All participating army personnel are required to pass four levels of investigation before entering the premises. Their arms, too, are thoroughly examined to ensure they are not loaded with bullets. The contingents are judged on 200 parameters during the parade, based on which, the 'Best Marching Group' title is awarded.

A caravan of camels

The most fascinating sight of the parade is the camel mounted Border Security Force contingent, which is currently the only camel mounted force in the world.

Make haste slowly

22-30 tableaux demonstrating the cultures of the various Indian states take part in the parade. The music of the particular state accompanies each display. 5 km/hour – that's the speed of these tableaux. This is so that the guests can watch them thoroughly.

The regal invite

The PM, president, or the ruler of any na-

tion gets invited as a guest for the parade. The former Indonesian president Dr Sukarno was invited as a guest in its first edition. In the years 2021 and 2022, however, the arrival of foreign chief guests to the parade was restricted owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The common man

In 2022, the autorickshaw drivers, construction workers, frontline soldiers and sanitation workers were invited to witness the patriotic spectacle for the very first time.

Pawrade

36 Indian canine soldiers, comprising 12 German Shepherds and 24 Labradors,

marched down the majestic Rajpath during the 67th Republic Day parade in 2016. It marked the return of K-9 Dog Squad to the parade after a long gap of 26 years.

A twist in the tale

'Abide With Me', Mahatma Gandhi's favourite song was played at every Republic Day celebration until 2023, when it was replaced by 'Aye Mere Watan ke Logon'.

Flypast ahoy!

The parade concludes with the dare devil motorcycle riding exhibition by the Armed Forces and a flypast by the Indian Air Force jets. The flypast involves the participation of around 41 aircrafts, all of which take off from distinct centres of the Airforce to reach Kartavya Path at a preset time.



Republic Day Parade 2024 Spectacle

✦ The theme for India's 75th Republic Day was 'Bharat - The Mother of Democracy' and 'Viksit Bharat'.

✦ France's president Emmanuel Macron graced the parade, making it the 6th time a French head became the chief guest for Republic Day.

✦ Two French Rafale jets and around 95 French Foreign Legion troops also partook in the event.

✦ This time, President Murmu arrived at the Rajpath in a traditional horse-drawn buggy, a practice that had been halted 40 years ago.

✦ An increased participation of women in contingents, tableaux, and performances was witnessed during the parade. Glimpses of a few...

- An all-women band, comprising four women sub-inspectors and 81 women constables from the Delhi Police, participated in the parade for the first time.
- The first ever all-women tri-service contingent took part in the parade this year.
- Donning sarees, a band of 112 women artists played folk percussion instruments at the parade, replacing the traditional military bands.

✦ As part of the government's vision of *Jan Bha-gidari*, some 13,000 special guests from different walks of life, most notably women workers of Swachh Bharat Abhi-yan and Central Vista Project, women space scientists of ISRO, Paralympic medalists et al, were also invited for the ceremonious parade.

✦ 1900 sarees from different parts of India were put on display during the event.