

IAF ALL SET TO CREATE A NEW WEAPON SYSTEMS BRANCH, SAYS AIR CHIEF

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V.R. Chaudhari during the Indian Air Force Day. [Twitter/@IAF_MCC](https://twitter.com/IAF_MCC)

The government has approved the creation of a Weapon System branch for officers in the Indian Air Force (IAF) which will bring all weapon systems operators of the force under one roof. This is the first time since Independence that a new operational branch is being created, said IAF chief Air Chief Marshal (ACM) V. R. Chaudhari on Saturday. The IAF also unveiled a new digital camouflage uniform for its rank and file.

“This will essentially be for manning of four specialised streams of Surface to Surface missiles, Surface to Air Missiles, Remotely Piloted Aircraft and weapon system operators in twin and multi crew aircraft,” ACM Chaudhari said addressing the Air Force Day parade to mark the 90th Air Force Day celebrations at Chandigarh. “Creation of this branch would result in savings of over Rs. 3,400 crore due to reduced expenditure on flying training.”

Creation of the new branch would entail unification of all weapon system operators under one entity dedicated to the operational employment of all ground-based and specialist airborne weapon systems, a Defence Ministry statement said.

“In a break from tradition, we have decided to conduct the Air Force Day parade at Chandigarh this year and in different locations across the country from here onwards,” the Air Chief said. “Today is an occasion to renew our allegiance to the Constitution of India and as preservers of the integrity and sovereignty of our country, we owe it to our future generations,” he stated.

As reported by *The Hindu* earlier, for the first time both the Army and Air Force Day parades are moving out of the National Capital Region (NCR). The next Army Day parade on January 15, 2023, will be held in Southern Command area.

Following the parade in the morning, a fly past was held over Sukna lake in Chandigarh which was witnessed by the public in large numbers. The flypast saw the participation of 74 aircraft and helicopters including 44 fighter aircraft while another nine platforms were on standby in the air. The recently inducted Light Combat Helicopter (LCH) was also part of the air display while the Suryakiran acrobatic team of the IAF enthralled the viewers. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh joined the Air Force Day celebrations. President of India Droupadi Murmu attended the flypast at Sukna lake. This shift of venue follows Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance that major events in national capital should be moved out to various places across the country to enable more people to witness and engage in them.

Induction of air warriors into the IAF through the Agnipath scheme is a “challenge for all us”, but more importantly, it is an opportunity to harness the potential of India's youth and channelise it towards the service of the nation, the Chief said. “We have changed our operational training methodology to ensure each Agniveer is equipped with the right skills and knowledge to start their career in the Air Force.” Stating that in December this year, they would be inducting 3,000 Agniveer Vayu for their initial training, he said this number will only go up in the years to come to ensure adequate staffing.

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