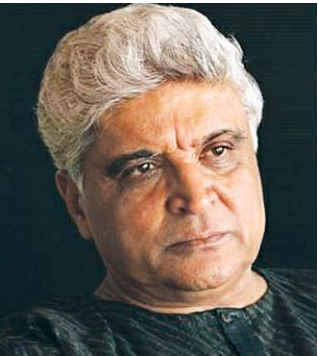


#JLF  
Jaipur Awaits  
Another Season  
of Ideas

Kiran Desai, former C J, D Y Chandrachud, Javed Akhtar, Stephen Fry, Sudha Murty, Vir Das, Vishwanathan Anand, Richard Horton, attending among others



Javed Akhtar.



D. Y. Chandrachud.



Richard Horton.



Stephen fry.

Every winter, Jaipur seems to pause and listen. The city's sandstone walls, familiar with centuries of stories, make room for new ones. Mornings begin not with haste, but with quiet anticipation, as readers, writers and wanderers move towards shared spaces where ideas wait to unfold. As the Jaipur Literature Festival returns for its 18th edition this January, the city once again prepares for five days when words take centre stage. From January 15 to 19, 2026, the festival finds its home in Jaipur, continuing a journey that was never designed to become monumental, yet grew naturally into one of the world's most recognisable literary gatherings. What began as an intimate space for conversation has, over time, evolved into a living, breathing exchange of thoughts, where disagreement is welcome, curiosity is rewarded, and listening is as important as speaking. This year's programme mirrors the complexity of the world we inhabit. Writers, thinkers, policymakers and artists from India and beyond arrive carrying different histories and perspectives. Voices such as Kiran Desai, former Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, Javed Akhtar, Stephen Fry, Sudha Murty, Vir Das, Vishwanathan Anand, Richard Horton and several others will take part in conversations that move effortlessly between literature, law, politics, science, humour and personal memory. No single discipline dominates; instead, ideas overlap and enrich one another. Perhaps, the festival's most distinctive feature is its audience. Young readers form its backbone, students, first-time attendees, and eager lis-

teners who arrive early, stay late, and ask difficult questions. Nearly two-thirds of the festival's audience is under the age of 27, turning JLF into a rare democratic space where literature is not distant or intimidating, but alive and immediate. It is here that a poet may find themselves followed by a physicist, or a historian listened to with the same intensity as a stand-up comic. The themes shaping this edition are rooted firmly in the present. Conversations around global conflict, shifting economic realities, and the growing influence of technology and artificial intelligence reflect shared anxieties and hopes. At the same time, an unexpected current runs through the programme, the supernatural. From folktales and myths to modern ghost stories, this strand suggests that even in an age driven by logic and innovation, humans remain drawn to mystery and the unseen. Beyond the sessions, the festival exists in its quieter moments. At Jaipur BookMark, publishers, translators and writers exchange ideas about the future of storytelling. At the Jaipur Music Stage, melodies drift through the air, blurring the line between performance and conversation. In between, people linger in corridors, on lawns, under winter sunlight, continuing discussions long after sessions end. In a time when opinions are often loud and attention is fleeting, the Jaipur Literature Festival offers something increasingly precious: space to think, listen and reflect. For five days, Jaipur becomes more than a host city. It becomes a meeting place of minds, where words feel close to life, and ideas, once heard, travel far beyond the festival grounds.



"My chest swells with pride knowing that finally the people of Jaipur will have a chance to watch their own Regiment, 61 Cavalry, in the Army Day parade. 61 Cavalry is the only contingent which has remained unchanged in the Army Day parade since 1953. We are always the First contingent on parade in both the Army Day and Republic Day parades, and this year, leading the parade in the hometown of the 61st Cavalry will be a priceless moment. Another point... I have myself had the proud privilege of leading the 61st Cavalry contingent in the Army Day and Republic Day parade of 1996." - Colonel Tarun Sirohi

# The Pink Turns Olive Green Today!



Pushpendra Bhargava  
(Owner of Jaipur Inn)

On 15 January 2026, the 78th Army Day Parade steps onto Jaipur's public roads for the first time. Here's the build-up, exhibition, rehearsals, Shaurya Sandhya, and the local pride stitched into it.

## Jaipur Goes "At Home": When Army Day Leaves the Cantonment

Jaipur understands that kind of memory in its bones. A city that grew around forts and courtyards also grew a habit of watching uniforms with a particular attention, half respect, half recognition. In my case, that attention has a personal origin: my father was a Wing Commander, and as a teenager, I learned that the armed forces aren't theatre. You feel them just as atmosphere, step into an army area and the air itself seems to stand straighter: stiff, upright, regimental.

This January, that feeling is moving outward, out of the cantonment and into the city's open roads. On 15 January 2026, Jaipur hosts the 78th Army Day Parade on Mahal Road, Jagatpura, not just the first time the parade is in Jaipur, but one of the clearest signals yet of the Army taking its signature ceremonies beyond Delhi and into civilian public space.



**Why this date matters**  
Army Day is marked on 15 January because it commemorates the day in 1949 when K. M. Cariappa took over as the first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army from the last British C-in-C, Francis Roy Bucher, a handover that became a yearly reminder of sovereignty, command, and institution-building.

So, the symbolism is baked in: Army Day is about who holds the reins. And Jaipur 2026 adds another layer, where the nation chooses to watch its Army.

## Why Jaipur feels like a homecoming

There are official reasons for choosing Jaipur, and then, there are cultural ones.

Rajasthan is often called 'the land of valour and sacrifice,' and Jaipur carries a long memory of victory parades and assembly grounds, jaleb chowks where soldiers once assembled and the kingdom reassured its citizens of safety and sovereignty. In 2026, Mahal Road becomes a kind of modern jaleb chowk, a public stretch where citizens can witness the Army up close.

## Operation Sindoor as the framing theme

In the programme language and public messaging around the 2026 celebrations, 'Operation Sindoor' appears as a thematic tribute, an emblem of capability, coordination, and readiness.

For Rajasthan's border belt, the memory of sudden alerts and contingency measures during India-Pakistan tension is not abstract. It

is lived. That proximity shapes the mood: excitement, yes, but with seriousness underneath.

## The week leading to 15 January: Jaipur as a living campus

This isn't a one-day spectacle. It's a week-long civic build-up with three major public touchpoints.

## Know Your Army (8-12 January)

Listed in the program, from 8 to 12 January 2026, the 'Know Your Army' exhibition at Bhawani Niketan College (Sikar Road), described as a public showcase of artillery/equipment and an open window into how the Army operates across terrains.

The exhibition featured an extensive static and dynamic display of weaponry and technology, offering visitors a close look at the Indian Army's modern capabilities. Highlights include displays of tanks, missile systems, and advanced defence technologies, along with interactive missile and bomb simulators that allow visitors to better understand army operations across diverse terrains. A special showcase titled *Operation Sindoor* presented the very military hardware used during the operation, illustrating how everything from the simplest ammunition to the most advanced air defence systems functioned together as one unified force with precision and purpose.

Ahead of the main parade, the exhibition invited residents who want to attend the main parade to arrive by a specified time and remain until the parade ends. What that translates to in plain Jaipur terms: this is a big public event, but not a free-for-all. The city is managing it like a Republic Day-style movement of people.

The event also features a dramatic re-enactment of Operation Sindoor, designed to underscore India's modern warfare capabilities and operational preparedness. Complementing this are several ceremonial and cultural elements, including the release of a First Day Cover, felicitation of martyrs' families and NOK (Veer Naris), and live demonstrations of traditional martial arts like Kalaripayattu from Kerala and Mallakhamb from Maharashtra, disciplines historically used to train ancient warriors and symbolizing strength, agility, and discipline. The programme is expected

## #MAHAL ROAD, MEMORY ROAD: A PINK CITY WEEK WITH OLIVE GREEN ARMY DAY



lantry awards, unit citations), along with veterans' events. It also notes telecast/live coverage through DD and official social handles.

## Shaurya Sandhya - SMS Stadium (15 January)

Listed in the program, The 2026 Shaurya Sandhya goes beyond conventional military showcases by blending heritage with cutting-edge technology. A major highlight is a spectacular drone show involving 1,000 drones, artistically portraying iconic Indian warriors such as Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, Maharana Pratap, and Rana Sangha, seamlessly integrated with an immersive light and sound performance.

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to reach an audience of nearly 25,000 citizens and will be attended by senior national leadership. Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will grace the occasion as the Chief Guest, alongside Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma. The event will also see the presence of CDS Gen. Anil Chauhan, Chief of Naval Staff Dinesh K. Tripathi, Chief of Air Staff Amar Preet Singh, and Chief of the Army Staff Uday Kumar.

## Rehearsals, registration and the Republic Day feel of crowd management on Mahal Road

Jaipur district administration has announced that residents who want to attend the main parade must get prior confirmation via the Citizen App or SSO portal, with e-Mitra also facilitating registration. The window reported is 6-14 January, and attendees are expected to arrive by a specified time and remain until the parade ends. What that translates to in plain Jaipur terms: this is a big public event, but not a free-for-all. The city is managing it like a Republic Day-style movement of people.



## Parade day on Mahal Road: the essentials

Listed in the program, The Indian Army Day Parade will be held on January 15, 2026, from approximately 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM, with the theme 'Bhartiya Sena - Shaurya aur Balidan ki Parampara' (Indian Army - Tradition of Valour and Sacrifice). The main parade will commence at 9:30 AM on Mahal Road, Jagatpura, covering a 3-kilometre public road stretch, offering open access unlike traditional cantonment venues. A wreath-laying ceremony at Prerna Sthal, South Western Command, Jaipur, will take place between 9:05 AM and 9:15 AM, and will be telecast live on Mahal Road screens and Doordarshan.

## A Jaipur heartbeat: 61st Cavalry on home roads

National ceremonies become local when you see your own inside them. In my interview with Colonel Tarun Sirohi, reflecting on 61st Cavalry's presence, puts it in a line that feels like a Jaipur emotion: "My chest swells with pride knowing that finally the people of Jaipur will have a chance to watch their own Regiment, 61 Cavalry, in the Army Day parade. 61 Cavalry is the only contingent which has remained unchanged in the Army Day parade since 1953. We are always the First contingent on parade in both the Army Day and Republic Day parades, and this year, leading the parade in the hometown of the 61st Cavalry will be a priceless moment. Another point... I have myself had the proud privilege



Maj Gen Rohit Mehrotra, GOC 61 Sub Area at the Parade Commander's Parade.



Padma Shri Dr. Maya Tandon with a colleague braving the weather but thrilled to be at the Army Day Parade rehearsal.

of leading the 61st Cavalry contingent in the Army Day and Republic Day parade of 1996."

Whatever else the parade includes, this is the simplest bridge for a Jaipur reader: your own regiment, on your own road.

## The youth line: NCC as living continuity

Seeing the NCC contingent takes me back to my own NCC days from St. Xavier's School, and to my elder brother Dr. Sandeep Bhargava attending NCC camps.

In my conversations around the NCC contingent preparing for this parade, what stayed with me was not only the drill, but the steadiness. A band of young girls can be seen marching with purposeful, determined strides, with their own marching bands, standing apart from the Army contingents, Senior Wing NCC cadets holding their line through Jaipur's winter. Two marching bands alongside them, and a wider group of cadets drawn from multiple states.

The biting cold has not daunted their enthusiasm as they march straight and proud with the soldiers. They have been here since the end of December, training daily, holding their own amongst trained troops, waiting for the final day. Their motivation is simple: to express the solidarity of youth with the Army and the nation.

## The voice that taught India how to watch

(As listed on the invite card)  
1. Major Shaitan Singh Bhati, PVC (P)

2. CHM Piru Singh Shekhawat, PVC (P)

3. Second Lieutenant Puneet Nath Datt, AC (P)

Melville de Mellow, the pioneer voice of parade commentary. Long before television, his radio narration made marching contingents and military hardware visible to listeners who could only imagine the scene. That reminder matters: ceremony is not only spectacle; it is also the language through which a nation learns what it is seeing.

## Field Marshal K. M. Cariappa as the symbol of Army Day

Army Day commemorates the moment India's Army leadership passed fully into Indian hands, and Field Marshal K. M. Cariappa remains central to the day's meaning in popular memory: professionalism, discipline, and service that stands above personal ties. In Jaipur, that idea lands in a particular way because Rajasthan knows what it means to treat service as inheri-

ance, and discipline as dignity. The first Indian Commander-in-Chief of the Indian Army stands as a towering symbol of military leadership and national service. A hero of the 1947-48 Indo-Pak War, he led Indian forces on the Western Front and played a decisive role in reclaiming strategic locations such as Zoji La Pass, Drass, and Kargil. Beyond the battlefield, he successfully oversaw the complex transition from British to Indian command after Independence, ensuring a fair division of the British Indian Army and laying the foundations of a professional, disciplined, and apolitical force firmly under civilian control.

Renowned for his integrity, patriotism, and uncompromising discipline, Cariappa lived by the creed: "The safety, honour, and welfare of your country come first, always and every time." His values were exemplified during the 1965 war, when he refused any special treatment for his own son captured as a POW, declaring, "He is no longer my son." He also popularised the salute 'Jai Hind,' which endures as a unifying call of national pride. As one of only two Indian officers to be conferred the five-star rank of Field Marshal (honorary), his legacy continues to inspire generations of soldiers with ideals of sacrifice, leadership, and unwavering devotion to India.

## A local closing: the father's circle, the city's salute

My father's world also included friends and officers whose names still carry warmth for me: Capt Gurbej Singh Arora, a decorated war veteran; Brig P. K. Gupta; Brig A. P. Bhargava, polished officers whose bearing made the uniform feel long before it became symbolic.

I would also like to very proudly mention that St. Xavier's School has three serving Lt. Generals at the present. Lt. Gen Padam Singh, Lt. Gen Anindya Sengupta and Lt. Gen Raghu Srinivasan.

Jaipur is about to add a new chapter to its civic memory. Roads will be rerouted, schedules tightened, passes checked. But beneath all that, the older thing will remain: a city learning to stand straighter in the presence of service.

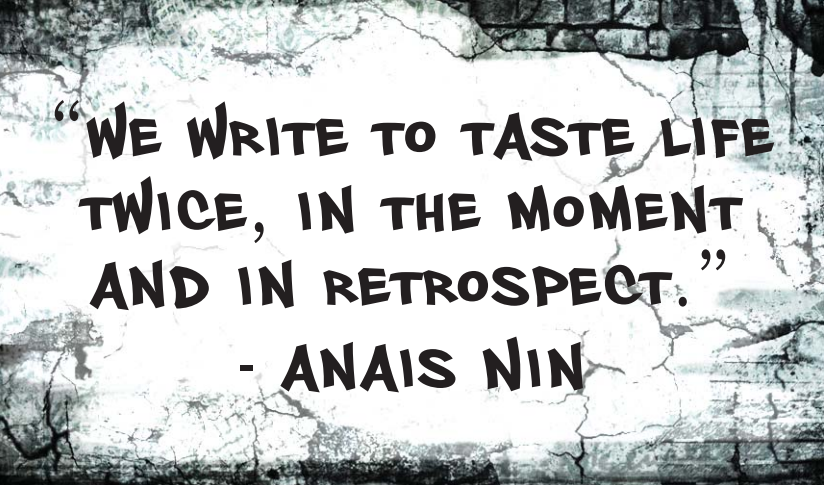
The youngest command in India is putting the spectacle together, thereby having the Pink City of Jaipur write a new chapter.

Padmaro Maro Desh. Jai Hind.

rajeshsharma1049@gmail.com



## THE WALL



## BABY BLUES



## ZITS



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott

By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman