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President’s Colours: Military and Police Honour

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President’s Colours: Military and Police Honour

The **President’s Colours** honour the service of an armed forces unit, training centre or police force. The honour takes the form of a special flag, also called **Nishaan**. It honours the force, rather than awarding a personal medal to one officer.

What the honour means

Who receives the President’s Colours?

The President’s Colours are the highest honour for an Indian armed forces unit. Police forces and training centres can receive the honour too. The award honours fine service to the nation.

Service in both war and peace can earn honour. A unit can contribute through operations, training or technical support. A training centre therefore need not be a combat regiment to qualify.

The President of India is the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. The President may present the Colour in person. Another chosen leader can present it on the President’s behalf.

The usual armed forces benchmark is 25 years of fine service. Completing 25 years does not by itself earn the honour. The quality of the unit’s service also matters.

Police honour concerns public service, discipline, bravery and skill. It should not be reduced to a test of battlefield victories. Puducherry Police earned the honour for hard work, valour and service.

Sources: pib.gov.in

Who earns the honour, and who presents it?

Recipient: the force An armed forces unit, training centre or police force earns the honour.

Presenter: the President or chosen leader The person presenting the flag does not change which force receives it.

Physical symbol: the ColourA special flag represents the force's fine service.

For example, Amit Shah presented the honour to Puducherry Police. The police force was the receiving unit.

Sources: pib.gov.in

Flags and the award ceremony

What happens during the ceremony?

The flag's design represents the unit's role and identity. Colours, Standards and Guidons belong to the wider custom of battle flags. The exact title depends on the unit and its customs.

A Colour is linked to infantry customs. Standards and Guidons belong to cavalry customs. A traditional guidon has a swallow-tailed shape. These names do not describe distinct grades of personal gallantry medals.

Unit insignia, mottos and earned battle honours can appear on battle flags. The design should be checked for the particular unit. Police Colours should not be assumed to carry a regiment's battle honours.

A formal parade marks the ceremony. The new flag can be placed on an altar made from drums. An all-faith prayer event blesses the Colour.

The all-faith event is called Sarvadharma Samaroh or Sarva Dharma Prarthana. Religious teachers offer prayers for the unit. Blessing is separate from handing the flag to its receiving officer.

The receiving officer is known as the **Nishan Adhikari**. At INS Valsura in March 2022, Lieutenant Arun Singh Sambyal received the Colour for the unit.

Himachal Pradesh Police received its Colours from Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar in December 2021. The example shows why the presenter need not always be the President.

A 21-gun salute should not be treated as a compulsory part of every delegated award event. Arrival honours depend on the dignitary and the event.

Sources: indianexpress.com; pib.gov.in; himachalwatcher.com



President Ram Nath Kovind reviews the parade at INS Valsura, 25 March 2022. Photo: Ministry of Defence / PIB. Original report and photographs.

From battlefield banners to ceremonial Colours

Why does a flag carry such honour?

Historically, troops rallied around their unit's banner on the battlefield. The flag helped show the unit and the commander's position. Losing the banner could bring disgrace; capturing an enemy's banner brought prestige.

The custom of honouring battle flags is centuries old. Modern award events preserve that symbolism through formal parades. Indian units do not now carry the Colour into battle.

Before India became a republic, units paraded the King's Colours at formal events. Independent India developed the President's Colours custom under its own head of state.

The Indian Navy became the first of India's three armed services to receive the President's Colour. President Rajendra Prasad presented it on **27 May 1951**.

The honour extends beyond combat units. The Indian Naval Academy and INS Valsura show how training centres can earn honour. Their task is to prepare personnel for naval service.

A ceremony by another leader is not evidence that the President has stopped presenting Colours. President Droupadi Murmu presented the Sikkim Police Colour on **28 May 2026**.

Sources: pib.gov.in; presidentofindia.gov.in

Which training and security forces have received Colours?

India became a republic in 1950. The Indian Military Academy also received President's Colours. Police training has its own example: the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy.

The Railway Protection Force has received the honour too. RPF is a railway security force. It should not be described as an Army support corps.

Sources: salute.co.in; svpnpa.gov.in; pib.gov.in

Three examples, three receiving units

1951: Indian Navy27 May: first among India's three armed services.
2022: INS Valsura25 March: a naval training centre receives the Colour.
2026: Puducherry Police9 August: a police force receives the honour.

The award can honour an armed service, a training unit or a police force. Each example has its own award event date.

Sources: pib.gov.in

Puducherry Police: 2026 award event

What happened on 9 August 2026?

Union Home Minister Amit Shah presented the President's Colours to Puducherry Police on **9 August 2026**. The event took place at Gorimedu in Puducherry.

President Droupadi Murmu had approved the honour on **8 May 2026**. Approval and award event were distinct events. The May date marks the decision; the August date marks the event.

Lieutenant Governor K. Kailashnathan and Chief Minister N. Rangasamy attended. Director General of Police Shalini Singh was also present. These names describe the officials at that event.

The award recognised the police force's service and discipline. Shah praised the force's hard work, valour and service.

Sources: pib.gov.in; timesofindia.indiatimes.com

Questions and answers

Is Nishaan a separate award?

No. Nishaan is another name used for the special flag linked to the President's Colours.

Does every receiving unit need combat victories?

No. Training centres and police forces also receive Colours. Their service must be understood through their own roles.

Is the presenter always the President?

No. A chosen leader can present the honour on the President's behalf.

Which dates distinguish Puducherry's approval and event?

Approval came on 8 May 2026. Amit Shah presented the Colours on 9 August 2026.

4 understanding checks

Quick check 1. Check 1. The President's Colours are a personal medal awarded to one police officer. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 2. Check 2. The Indian Navy received the President's Colour on 27 May 1951. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 3. Check 3. Blessing and handing the Colour to the receiving officer describe the same step. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Quick check 4. Check 4. Puducherry's May 2026 approval and August 2026 award event were distinct events. *(True or False?)* See answer ↓

Answered of 4 · Correct

5 practice MCQs

Check the name, first naval award event, service benchmark, blessing and Puducherry example.

Practice MCQs

1. The President's Colours, India's highest honour for a military unit or police force, is also known by which name?

A. Ashoka Stambh

B. Nishaan

C. Vijay Patra

D. Rajmudra

See answer ↓

2. Which force became the first branch of India's Armed Forces to receive the President's Colours, on 27 May 1951?

A. Indian Army

B. Indian Air Force

C. Indian Navy

D. Indian Coast Guard

See answer ↓

3. For a military unit, the President's Colours generally requires how many years of distinguished service?

A. 25 years

B. 15 years

C. 50 years

D. 10 years

See answer ↓

4. During the President's Colours ceremony, the Sarvadharma Samaroh involves military chaplains from India's major faiths doing what?

A. Jointly consecrating the new Colour

B. Presenting the Colour to the Nishan Adhikari

C. Leading the 21-gun salute

D. Reciting the unit's battle honours aloud

See answer ↓

5. In August 2026, which Union Territory's police force received the President's Colours?

A. Lakshadweep

B. Puducherry

C. Ladakh

D. Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu

See answer ↓

Answer Key

1. **B.**
   Nishaan is another name for the special flag linked to the President's Colours. The flag stands for a unit or police force. It is not a personal gallantry medal. Rajmudra, Ashoka Stambh and Vijay Patra are not names for this honour.
   Review President's Colours: military and police honour.
   ↑ Q1

2. **C.**
   The Indian Navy received the President's Colour on 27 May 1951. President Rajendra Prasad presented it. The question asks which of India's armed services received the honour first. The Army and Air Force were not the first receiving units among the three services.
   Review President's Colours: military and police honour.
   ↑ Q2

3. **A.**
   The usual armed forces benchmark is 25 years of fine service. The award honours the quality of service during peace and war. Reaching that year mark alone does not by itself earn it. The other options do not give the stated benchmark.
   Review President's Colours: military and police honour.
   ↑ Q3

4. **A.**
   The all-faith event blesses the new Colour through prayers. Religious teachers from distinct faiths participate. Blessing is separate from the flag's award event to the Nishan Adhikari. It does not mean reciting battle honours or leading a gun salute.
   Review President's Colours: military and police honour.
   ↑ Q4

5. **B.**
   Puducherry Police received the President's Colours on 9 August 2026. Union Home Minister Amit Shah presented the honour. President Droupadi Murmu had approved it in May. The other choices name distinct Union Territories.
   Review President's Colours: military and police honour.
   ↑ Q5

Quick-check answers

1. **False.** The flag stands for a unit, training centre or police force. Its physical symbol is a special flag. ↑ 1
2. **True.** The Navy was the first of India's three armed services to receive it. ↑ 2
3. **False.** Prayers consecrate the flag. The Nishan Adhikari receives it on the unit's behalf. ↑ 3
4. **True.** Approval came on 8 May. Amit Shah presented the honour on 9 August. ↑ 4

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