

Army unveils new uniform policy, phases out colonial-era practices

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

In a significant move aimed at modernising military traditions and reinforcing an indigenous identity, the Indian Army has introduced revised dress regulations that progressively remove residual colonial-era practices, terminology, and non-essential accoutrements.

The new policy, elaborated in the Army Uniforms-2026 Pamphlet, reflects the Army's effort to align its dress regulations with contemporary Indian values while maintaining the service's rich traditions and professional standards.

A notable feature of the revised regulations is the



The changes are aimed at enhancing uniformity, practicality and ease of implementation across the force. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS

introduction of a common Uniform Numbering Scheme for the Army, Navy, and the Air Force. The initiative is intended to improve clarity, interoperability, and synergy among the three services while simplifying references to various dress categories.

The Army has retained four broad categories of uniforms – Ceremonial Dress, Working Dress, Mess Dress, and Combat Dress. Unique dress numbers have been assigned to each uniform for ease of identification and administration.

Reflecting India's evolving national identity and contemporary ethos, the latest edition of the Army Uniforms Pamphlet introduces several key changes aimed at shedding remnants of colonial-era practices. Among the notable reforms are the inclusion of the traditional Bandi Jacket as part of formal civil attire, removal of the pouch belt from Mess Dress Nos. 5 and 6, making sword carriage by the Reviewing Officer optional, and discontinuing outdated terminology such as "Royal".

The Army has announced the phased withdrawal of legacy patterns such as Dress No. 3A, which will be discontinued by June 30, 2029.



INS Sharda concludes visit to Colombo, boosts bilateral ties

Indian Naval Ship (INS) *Sharda* departed Colombo on June 13 after a successful port call that further strengthened maritime cooperation and friendship between India and Sri Lanka. The visit featured a range of professional, training and sporting engagements between the two maritime forces. The Indian Navy informed that as part of capacity-building initiatives, Sri Lankan Navy personnel received training in small arms handling, basic firefighting, first-aid and rescue procedures aboard the ship. The engagements were aimed at enhancing operational preparedness and fostering greater interoperability between the two forces.

IUML, UDF on sticky wicket over non-Muslim members' nomination to Waqf Board

As BJP leader moves HC challenging non-inclusion of non-Muslims in the board, onus on IUML and UDF to take call on communally sensitive issue; Minister says govt. will take a stand within a week

K S Sudhi
KOCHI

The Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) and the United Democratic Front (UDF) have found themselves in a precarious position over the nomination of two non-Muslim members to the State Waqf Board.

Section 14(1)(f) of the Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025 provides that two members of the board, excluding the *ex officio* members, shall be non-Muslim.

The previous Left Democratic Front (LDF) government, which reconstituted the board during the fag end of its tenure, had appointed nine people from the Muslim community to the board while leaving the two slots vacant, in an apparent bid not to rattle the community's sentiments. Besides the Kerala government, the previous DMK-led Tamil Nadu government also took the same route, leading to litigation.

The onus is now on the IUML and the UDF to take a



The previous LDF government, which reconstituted the board during the fag end of its tenure, had appointed nine persons from the Muslim community to the board while leaving the two slots vacant. FILE PHOTO

call on the communally sensitive issue as Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader Shone George has moved the Kerala High Court challenging the non-inclusion of non-Muslims in the board.

In his petition challenging the “unconstitutional functioning of the Kerala State Waqf Board,” Mr. George contended that the State government deliberately flouted the statutory provisions of the Act by nominating only Muslims.

The State, which appointed only nine Muslim members, had tactically

promised that the “remaining two members would be appointed shortly,” he argued.

Mr. George also argued that the State Waqf Board “lacked jurisdiction, rendering all its administrative, supervisory, and quasi-judicial decisions null and void” *ab initio*. He also sought to declare the board’s functioning as illegal besides seeking a direction to immediately nominate non-Muslims and to restrain it from functioning until it is lawfully constituted.

The High Court has asked

the State government to file an affidavit in the case in two weeks.

The IUML, which had challenged the 2025 Act in the Supreme Court, will have to firm up its stand on the issue, which may leave social and legal ramifications for the organisation.

The Supreme Court is yet to finally decide on the petitions filed by the IUML and the challenge to the act of the Tamil Nadu government of not nominating non-Muslims to the board.

‘Decision soon’

Responding to the developments, IUML State general secretary P.M.A. Salam said a decision on the issue will be taken after discussing it with the UDF.

N. Samsudheen, the Minister for Hajj, Waqf, and Minority Welfare, said the government will take a stand on the issue within a week after holding discussions in the party.

He added that the government will make its stand known to the court within the time limit.

• DEFENCE

AN-32: Soviet-origin transport aircraft, the IAF's workhorse

Amrita Nayak Dutta
New Delhi, June 14

FIVE PERSONNEL of the Indian Air Force (IAF) were killed Saturday when a military transport aircraft, the Antonov AN-32, crashed during landing at Jorhat in Assam. One other person on board the aircraft has been rescued and is undergoing treatment.

This is the third major crash of an AN-32 over the past decade. The two other crashes have killed 42 IAF personnel.

What is the AN-32?

Bought in 1984 from the erstwhile Soviet Union, the AN-32s have served as the IAF's critical workhorse. The IAF has employed it as a tactical transport aircraft since its induction into the force.

The AN-32 is a twin-engine turboprop aircraft and can carry a maximum weight of 27 tonnes at a maximum speed of 530 km per hour. It can carry up to 6.7 tonnes of cargo or 50 passengers, making it the pre-

ferred choice for transport of men and cargo across different terrain.

The aircraft can cover small to medium ranges and can operate from far-flung airfields with minimum ground infrastructure, enabling it to play critical roles during a conflict, especially in the mobilisation of men and material and with its limited bombing role.

It has also been used for parachuting operations. During the Kargil War with Pakistan in 1999 and subsequently in Operation Parakram in 2001-02, it played a critical role in transporting personnel and cargo to border areas through multiple sorties.

Modernisation programme

After an AN-32 crashed in 2009, India signed a \$400-million contract with Ukrainian manufacturer Antonov to upgrade most of the IAF's 105 AN-32s through overhaul of airframes and turboprop engines. The programme also involved fitting the platforms with advanced navigation



The Antonov AN-32.
WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

and communication equipment.

The programme, however, stalled after Russia formally annexed the Crimea region in 2014. Subsequently, India and Ukraine agreed to resume the upgrades, with Kyiv having developed some alternatives to the Russian-made systems on the aircraft. The upgrade was under way at the IAF's base repair depot (BRD) in Kanpur, with equipment transferred from Ukraine. About half

of the planes had been modernised in Ukraine, and 38 have been at the BRD.

Safety record

The AN-32 is considered among the most reliable transport aircraft in the IAF's inventory. But the crash in Jorhat is the third major one since 2016.

On July 22, 2016, an AN-32 went missing while flying over the Bay of Bengal, from Tambaram Air Force Station, Chennai, to Port Blair, killing 29 people on board. The wreck was traced years later.

Then on June 3, 2019, an AN-32 crashed in the hilly terrain when it was heading to Mechuka in West Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh, near the border with China, killing 13 people on board. The wreck was found over a week after the aircraft went missing.

There was another major crash on June 10, 2009, when an IAF AN-32 crashed at around the same place in Arunachal Pradesh, killing all 13 people on board.

India, China in talks over joint UNESCO nomination for Xuanzang's work

Divya A

New Delhi, June 14

TO SPEED up the process of safeguarding heritage, the BRICS countries are deliberating on filing joint nominations for various UNESCO lists. In this line, India and China are in advanced stages of discussions over a joint nomination for 'The Great Tang Records on the Western Regions', a narrative of Chinese Buddhist monk and scholar Xuanzang's travels through medieval India in the 7th century.

The proposal, led by China and to be supported by India, is presently under consideration with the Ministry of External Af-

fairs, as per sources. China had earlier reached out through diplomatic channels to convey an interest in pursuing a joint nomination for an inscription in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List.

The accounts of Xuanzang, also known as Hiuen Tsang, who spent 19 years travelling through India, remain a source for the study of early medieval India. He studied at the Nalanda University and captured the political, social and religious practices of the time in his accounts.

India also aims at securing a place for Panchatantra on the UNESCO list along with Iran as

E. EXPLAINED

Why joint nominations

The idea is to skip the queue since each country is allowed only two dossiers during the two-year cycle of UNESCO heritage lists, and most BRICS nations have a lot of heritage that needs safeguarding. As per officials, there is no limit on nations filing joint nominations, with the dossier led by one country, backed by others.

the fables have been a staple of Persian literature and folklore for over 1,500 years: as also for the philosophy of Satyagraha along with South Africa, official sources told *The Indian Express*.

This has come out of deliberations at the recent BRICS Culture Working Group meet under India's chair, which was attended by delegations from Brazil, China, South Africa, the UAE, Indonesia and Iran, with representatives from Russia, Ethiopia, and Egypt joining in hybrid mode.

The second meeting of the BRICS Culture Working Group was held in Varanasi earlier this month. At the inaugural session,

Union Culture Secretary, Vivek Aggarwal, highlighted BRICS countries are home to some of the world's oldest civilisations while also representing vibrant and evolving contemporary cultural landscapes. The recommendations from the Second Culture Working Group meet will be sent to BRICS Cultural Track ministerial meet in August in Bhopal, so they could be reflected in the joint statement by BRICS Culture Ministers.

At a panel discussion on "Collaborative Approaches for Safeguarding Shared Heritage: Joint Nominations under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, Intangible Cultural

Heritage, and the Memory of the World Programme", during the meet, delegates explored opportunities for collaborative nominations among BRICS countries.

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In 2017, as India had sent Sowa-Rigpa, the Tibetan system of medicine, as its official entry

for UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list, China had also sent a similar entry, claiming Sowa-Rigpa as its own.

Ramesh C Gaur, Dean, Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, the government's nodal agency for preparing and presenting these nominations, said, "BRICS nations have a lot of common, overlapping heritage — be it the Ramayana traditions equally popular in India and Indonesia, the Buddhist scriptures common to India and China, or Panchatantra in India and Iran. If we leverage joint nominations, we can achieve a lot towards safeguarding our civilisational heritage."

Modi, Macron bilateral talk stresses economic security

India, France adopt 'Innovation Roadmap 2030', establish 'Economic Security Dialogue' as the two leaders meet in French city of Nice; meet calls for fast adoption of India-EU FTA, AI cooperation

Sriram Lakshman

LONDON

India and France adopted an 'Innovation Roadmap 2030' and established a Dialogue on Economic Security during bilateral talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron held in Nice on Sunday.

A press release from the government outlined a number of themes – including calling for the fast adoption of the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

Earlier this year, the two countries had renamed their partnership a 'Special Global Strategic Partnership' to reflect an enhanced level of cooperation.

No traditional 'joint statement' had emerged



Eyeing the sky: PM Narendra Modi takes in the sea with French President Emmanuel Macron ahead of talks in Nice on Sunday. AP

from the meeting as of this writing.

“Recognising the key role of innovation and technology in the bilateral relationship, both sides adopted an ‘Innovation Roadmap 2030’ to give the partnership a long-term direction,” the press release said, with the two leaders

agreeing to create a Joint India-France AI Working Group to expand cooperation in AI. They also noted the signing of 19 agreements between entities in the innovation ecosystems of the two countries.

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Modi, Macron open Bharat Innovates 2026

Sriram Lakshman

LONDON

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron on Sunday co-inaugurated the Bharat Innovates 2026 in Nice where the leaders focused on trust and cooperation in technology. Mr. Modi invited investors to “design and develop in India” to “create solutions for the world”, while Mr. Macron said India brings the reliability that the world seeks at moments of upheaval in geopolitics.

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PM, Macron talk stresses economic security

Calling for the early implementation of the India-EU FTA, which was signed in February this year, the two sides agreed to set up a High-Level Mechanism to double trade in five years. The discussion also focused on cooperation in the SME, rail, and aviation sectors.

Mr. Modi and Mr. Macron agreed to strengthen supply chain resilience, particularly in critical minerals, as part of the 'Dialogue on Economic Security', as per the press release.

On the major crises in the world - in West Asia, including Iran and Gaza, as well as on Ukraine - the press release remained circumspect relative to the February 17, 2026 joint statement from the two countries, saying only that leaders exchanged views "on matters of global importance, including the situation in West Asia and Ukraine".

The Prime Minister thanked Mr. Macron for the speedy implementation of visa-free transit for Indians in French airports and invited French universities to open campuses in India under the New Education Policy, as per the government statement.

The two leaders discussed private sector collaboration in the space sector and the SHANTI Act's (legislation governing the nuclear sector) implications in India.

"I think the field is open for French nuclear companies in this case to start looking at direct participation in the Indian nuclear sector, or do so with in participation with Indian private sector companies, whether in conventional nuclear power reactors or in the more advanced small modular reactors," Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said at a press briefing in Nice.

Mr. Misri also confirmed that discussions between French power giant EDF and the Nuclear Power Cooperation of India Limited for the Jaitapur nuclear power plant - with six reactor units - were still on-going. The project has been under discussion for more than 15 years.

Following the bilateral discussions, Mr. Modi departed France for Vienna from where he travelled to Bratislava, Slovakia, for the second leg of his Europe visit.

India, France

● KEY OUTCOMES

- Adoption of India-France Innovation Roadmap 2030
- Creation of a Joint India-France AI Working Group focused on AI governance
- MoU on establishment of a National Centre of Excellence for Skilling in Aeronautics and Allied Sectors at NSTI, Kanpur
- Expanded possibilities for using India's UPI in France
- Incubation of an additional 10 Indian start-ups at Station F, Paris
- Establishment of a Centre of Digital Sciences between Department of Science and Technology (DST) and Institut National de Recherche en Sciences et Technologies du Numérique (INRIA)
- Establishment of an ICCR India Chair on 'AI, Innovation and Culture' at Universite Paris-Saclay
- Letter of Intent between Indian Council of Medical Research and Health Data Hub of France
- Setting up a high-level mechanism for realising the goal of doubling bilateral trade in the next five years, building on the existing Economic and Financial Dialogue
- Institution of an Economic Security Dialogue
- Declaration of Intent on cooperation on railway and high-speed railway development in India
- General Security Agreement on the exchange and protection of classified information
- Letter of Intent between ISRO and CNES on cooperation in microgravity research and human space exploration

China's ability to launch direct missile strikes on Australia 'growing': report

Agence France-Presse
SYDNEY

China is capable of a direct missile strike on Australia and the threat is growing as Beijing amasses long-range and hypersonic weapons and builds islands in the South China Sea, an Australian think tank said on Sunday.

A Lowy Institute report found the main threat to Australia was from Chinese missiles fired from ships, submarines and a new intermediate-range ballistic missile that could reach the island continent from China.



On the watch: China test-fires an intercontinental ballistic missile into the Pacific Ocean, at an undisclosed location. FILE PHOTO

China's capacity to strike Australia would grow over the next decade as "the Dong Feng (DF)-27 intermediate-range ballis-

tic missile, and potentially a conventionally armed intercontinental ballistic missile, grow in service numbers", it said.

The DF-27 missile has a range of 5,000 to 8,000 kilometres, the U.S. military said in December.

"I think the growth of the People's Liberation Army is the most important thing to happen to Australian security since the collapse of the Soviet Union," said Sam Roggeveen, the director of the Lowy Institute's International Security Programme.

Australia reshaped its military strategy three years ago in response to China's rapid navy build-up, focusing on deterring an adversary from its northern approaches.

U.K. forces intercept sanctioned oil vessel linked to Russia's shadow fleet

Armed forces board and detain the fuel tanker attempting to cross the English Channel 'in the first U.K.-led operation of its kind', British Ministry says; Ukraine's Foreign Minister welcomes the operation, calls the shadow fleet a 'tool of war'

Agence France-Presse

LONDON

British forces on Sunday intercepted a sanctioned oil tanker belonging to Russia's shadow fleet in an operation hailed by Kyiv as a blow to Moscow's war machine.

Navy commandos boarded the ship in the English Channel by fast-roping from a helicopter, according to footage released by the Defence Ministry.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Andriy Sybiga welcomed the operation.

"Russia's shadow fleet is a tool of war. Every such vessel stopped means less money for Russia's war ma-



Drop and deploy: Royal Marine commandos detain a sanctioned tanker, the *Smyrtos*, in the English Channel on Sunday. AP

chine," he posted on social media. "Cutting off these revenues helps reduce Russia's ability to finance missile and drone attacks against Ukrainian cities."

The six-hour interception operation was sup-

ported by Chinook, Merlin Mk4 and Wildcat helicopters and a maritime patrol aircraft, a Ministry statement said. The frigate *HMS Sutherland* and the mine-hunter *HMS Ledbury* were also involved.

"In the first U.K.-led operation of its kind, the vessel *Smyrtos* was boarded by Royal Marine Commandos and specially trained law enforcement officers despite Russia's best efforts to evade sanctions and continue fuelling its war with Ukraine," the Ministry of Defence statement said.

The vessel was to be moved to an anchorage off the south coast of England and monitored, it added.

Embargo evasion

The U.K. has sanctioned hundreds of vessels suspected of being part of the shadow fleet used by Russia to bypass Western embargoes since the invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

"Russia relies on its shadow fleet to fund their conflict in Ukraine and our interdiction delivers a blow to [Russian President Vladimir] Putin's illegal war," said newly appointed U.K. Defence Minister Dan Jarvis. He said the operation was carried out in "coordination with the French".

According to the MaritimeTraffic website, *Smyrtos* sails under the Cameroon flag and left the Russian port of Ust-Luga on June 5, with Port Said, Egypt, listed as its destination.

France, Belgium, Finland and other European countries have also seized sanction-busting vessels believed to belong to the so-called shadow fleet.

Iran questions U.S. push for truce after Israel hits Beirut

Associated Press

Reuters

DUBAI/WASHINGTON

Iran's top negotiator on Sunday questioned the U.S.'s commitment to peace efforts after Israel carried out new attacks on Lebanon, dimming prospects of Tehran and Washington signing a framework agreement on ending their war during the day as claimed by U.S. President Donald Trump.

Qatari negotiators flew to Tehran on Sunday morning as part of an effort to finalise the agreement, according to sources. But Iranian negotiator and Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf said on Sunday that Israel's attack showed the U.S. lacked the will or ability to fulfil its commitments.

"If you lack the will and ability to fulfil your commitments, speaking of con-

tinuing the path is not possible," Mr. Ghalibaf wrote on X, in an apparent reference to peace moves.

Following Israel's attack, Mr. Trump on Sunday said the strikes on Lebanese capital, Beirut, "should not have happened" as he vowed a peace deal was at hand, though he did not confirm his earlier claim it would be signed during the day.

Mr. Trump, who, in a phone call to the Axios news outlet, said the deal was still on track to be signed within hours, fumed at Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the attack on Beirut.

He said, "it is so bad – I couldn't believe it. An hour before we are supposed to sign the deal."

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THREE KILLED IN BEIRUT

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Iran questions U.S. deal after Israel hits Beirut

In a sign that a diplomatic off-ramp was still available, Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian said on Sunday that the country's highest security body supported negotiations despite criticism from hardliners.

"The Supreme National Security Council has concluded that the path of dialogue should be pursued," the Iranian President said, pointedly adding that the council was in charge of "decisions regarding war and negotiations".

U.S. Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said he did not expect the Israeli attack to "disrupt" the progress towards a deal.

"From all I know, we are on track," he said. "It is not a matter of if. It is a matter of when."

The U.S. President and mediator Pakistan said on Saturday they expected the deal would be signed on Sunday, but Tehran had cast doubt over the timing while hardline protesters in Iran voiced opposition. Mr. Trump had said the Strait of Hormuz would open immediately after the signing.

Mohammad Jafar Assadi, deputy commander of Iran's top joint military command, was quoted by state media as saying Israeli "crimes" in Beirut's southern suburbs would not go unanswered.

Mr. Trump stressed in a later post that "there should be no more attacks by Israel anywhere in Lebanon, but there should also be no more attacks by any other party, including Hezbollah, against Israel."

Hezbollah fired missiles into Israel on March 2, two days after the U.S. and Israel attacked Iran and sparked the war in West Asia. Israeli troops have since pushed their invasion of Lebanon deeper than at any point in over a quarter century.

Iran wants a ceasefire deal to include the fighting in Lebanon.

Iran's government warned that any division at home over the deal weakens its negotiating position, and those criticising negotiators are taking aim at a national decision. Iranians must recognise that no war lasts forever, spokesperson Fate-meh Mohajerani told the state-run *IRNA news agency*.

Mr. Trump was expected to discuss demining the Strait of Hormuz during the G7 summit in France on Monday.

Swiss reject population cap in referendum, avoiding EU clash

Reuters

Zurich, June 14

SWITZERLAND ON Sunday rejected a proposal to cap its population at 10 million as voters prioritised economic stability and ties with the European Union over worries immigration was stretching public services and pushing up rents.

A preliminary tally of a nationwide referendum showed almost 55% of Swiss voters

came out against the proposal, and 45% in favour. The vote, which was likened to Britain's 2016 Brexit referendum, had put businesses on edge due to concerns it could end the free movement of labour between Switzerland and the EU, the country's main trading partner.

Championed by the right-wing Swiss People's Party, the proposal stipulated that the population must not exceed 10 million before 2050, and that if

it did so for two years, Switzerland should end freedom of movement with the EU.

The government had urged voters to reject the cap. Swiss Justice Minister Beat Jans welcomed the result but pledged to analyse what further steps could be taken to satisfy voter concerns about housing and immigration. "With today's decision, the electorate has sent out a signal of stability, openness, and reliability," Jans told a

press conference alongside Swiss President Guy Parmelin.

Urs Bieri from pollster GFS Bern said the cap failed to pass because while concern about population growth is widespread, people were worried it could damage Swiss relations with the EU and make it harder to recruit staff, and find workers like carers.

"Also there's a feeling that in the current international environment, it's not sensible for

a small country to do this," Bieri said.

The Swiss population already stands at 9.1 million and has grown far more quickly than in the surrounding EU. Foreigners make up nearly 28% of the total, which official projections forecast will reach 10 million by the early 2040s.

Polls had forecast a close outcome. In the end, the 'no' camp's victory was clearer than many analysts had expected.