

President Approved Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medals (SYSM)

On the eve of the 79th Independence Day, President Droupadi Murmu approved the awarding of seven Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medals (SYSM) for military leaders involved in Operation Sindoor. The awards recognized exceptional leadership and strategic planning during the India-Pakistan confrontation in May 2025.

Operation Sindoor

- **Trigger:** The operation was launched on May, 2025, following a terror attack in Pahalgam, which was linked to the Lashkar-e-Taiba and killed 26 civilians.
- **Action:** The Indian Armed Forces, led by the recipients of the medals, conducted precise missile strikes targeting terrorist infrastructure in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK). The Indian Air Force (IAF) also struck multiple Pakistani air bases.
- **Outcome:** The operation successfully dismantled cross-border terror infrastructure and reinforced security along the Line of Control.

Recipients of the Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal

The seven medals were distributed among the three branches of the armed forces for their role in Operation Sindoor.

The recipients included **four from the Indian Air Force:** Air Marshal Narmadeshwar Tiwari, Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor, Air Marshal Jeetendra Mishra, and Air Marshal A.K. Bharti. **The Indian Army received two awards:** Lt Gen Rajiv Ghai and Lt Gen Pratik Sharma. **The Indian Navy received one award,** given to Vice Admiral Sanjay Jasjit Singh (Retd.), marking the first time a naval officer received the SYSM.

Explanation of Exam Oriented Key Terms

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Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal

The Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal is India's highest wartime decoration for distinguished service of the most exceptional order during war, conflict, or hostilities. Instituted on June 26, 1980, it is the wartime equivalent of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal awarded for peacetime service. The medal has been awarded infrequently, with a recent instance being in 2025 for roles in Operation Sindoor.

Award details

- **Highest wartime distinguished service award:** The SYSM is India's highest award for distinguished service during war, conflict, or hostilities. It is distinct from gallantry awards, which are given for acts of bravery and valour.
- **Equivalent to PVSM:** It is the wartime equivalent of the Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM), which recognizes the most exceptional distinguished service in peacetime.
- **Established in 1980:** The award was instituted on June 26, 1980.
- **Conferred by the President:** The President of India awards the medal.

Eligibility and criteria

- **Who is eligible?** The medal is open to all ranks of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. This includes:
 - Territorial Army Units
 - Auxiliary and Reserve Forces
 - Nursing Officers and other members of the Nursing Services in the Armed Forces
- **What is the criteria?** It is awarded for "distinguished service of the most exceptional order during war, conflict or hostilities".
- **Posthumous awards:** The medal can be awarded posthumously.

Physical features

- **Design:** The medal is circular, gold-gilt, and 35 mm in diameter.
- **Obverse:** It features the State Emblem and the inscription "SARVOTTAM YUDH SEVA MEDAL".
- **Reverse:** It has a five-pointed star.
- **Ribbon:** The ribbon is golden with a central red vertical stripe.
- **Bar for repeat awards:** A bar is added to the ribbon for each subsequent award of the medal.

Recent context

- **Rarely awarded:** The SYSM is exceptionally rare. Before 2025, it had only been awarded a few times since its institution.
- **Operation Sindoor (2025):** In August 2025, seven SYSMs were awarded to senior officers for their leadership in Operation Sindoor, marking the largest single conferment of the award.
- **Notable recipients:** Past recipients include Lt. Gen. Amarjit Singh Kalkat (Operation Pawan) and Air Marshal Vinod Patney (Kargil War).

Comparative ranking

- **Not a gallantry award:** The SYSM is a distinguished service medal, not a gallantry award. It recognizes exceptional leadership and operational command, not battlefield bravery.
- **Gallantry award vs. distinguished service awards:**
 - Highest gallantry award (wartime): Param Vir Chakra
 - Highest gallantry award (peacetime): Ashoka Chakra
 - Highest distinguished service award (wartime): Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal (SYSM)

Highest distinguished service award (peacetime): Param Vishisht Seva Medal (PVSM)

Practice Questions:

1. With reference to Indian military decorations, consider the following awards:

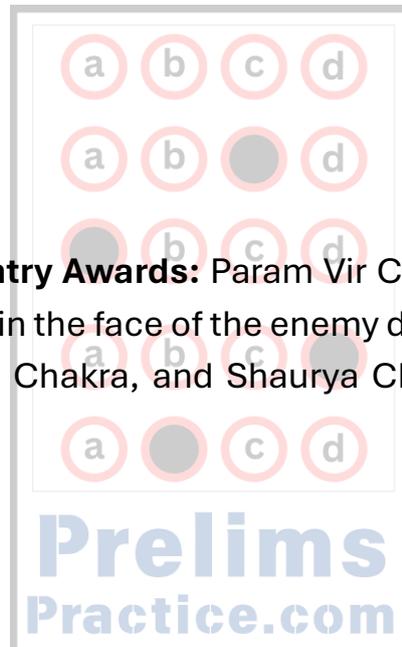
- I. Param Vir Chakra
- II. Ashoka Chakra
- III. Vir Chakra
- IV. Shaurya Chakra

How many of the above are considered wartime gallantry awards?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) Only three
- d) All four

Answer: b

Explanation: Wartime Gallantry Awards: Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra, and Vir Chakra are instituted for valor in the face of the enemy during war. **Peacetime Gallantry Awards:** Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra, and Shaurya Chakra are for courage and valor away from the battlefield.



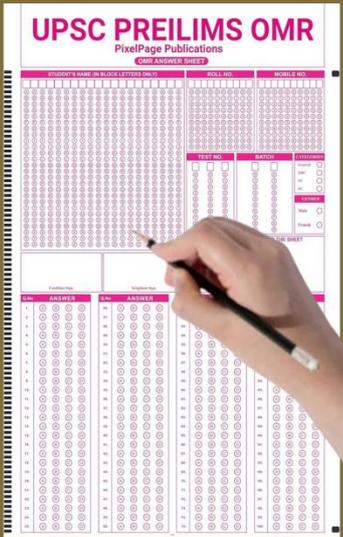
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