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# Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose — Parakram Diwas and the Legacy of Armed Courage

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**SUBJECTS COVERED****HISTORY & CULTURE****POLITY****CURATED & WRITTEN BY****Bharat Choudhary**

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# Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose — Parakram Diwas and the Legacy of Armed Courage

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## WHY IN NEWS

India observed the 129th birth anniversary of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose on January 23, 2026, as Parakram Diwas. The Ministry of Culture organised three-day celebrations (January 23–25) with the central venue at Sri Vijaya Puram (formerly Port Blair), Andaman & Nicobar Islands — the site where Netaji hoisted the Tricolour in 1943.

## NETAJI SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE — THE MAN WHO CHOSE A DIFFERENT PATH

In the gallery of India's freedom struggle, few figures are as simultaneously celebrated and contested as Subhas Chandra Bose. A man who ranked 4th in the Indian Civil Services examination chose to resign and serve the nation instead; a Congress president who was democratically elected but forced to resign; a revolutionary who sought alliances with the Axis powers not from ideology but from strategic desperation — Netaji's life was a series of choices that conventional politics could not contain.

## EARLY LIFE AND ICS

Subhas Chandra Bose was born on **January 23, 1897** in **Cuttack, Odisha** (then Orissa Province of British India). His father, **Janakinath Bose**, was a distinguished advocate who served as Government Pleader — a family of learning and public service.

Bose completed his graduation from **Presidency College, Calcutta** (now Presidency University), and then from **Christ's College, Cambridge**, where he read mental and moral sciences. In **1920**, he appeared for the **Indian Civil Service (ICS) examination** — the most competitive examination of the British colonial era — and **ranked 4th** overall.

But Bose had already been transformed by the political ferment around him. Under the influence of **Mahatma Gandhi's Non-Cooperation Movement** (1920–22) and inspired by **Chittaranjan Das** (C.R. Das, the "Deshbandhu"), he **resigned from the ICS in 1921** — a radical act that shocked the colonial establishment and announced that a new generation of leaders was choosing conscience over career.

## POLITICAL CAREER IN THE CONGRESS

Bose rose rapidly within the Indian National Congress under the mentorship of C.R. Das. After Das's death in 1925, Bose emerged as a leading voice of the Congress's more militant left wing.

### Key milestones:

**1927–1929:** General Secretary of the Indian National Congress

**1930:** Elected Mayor of Calcutta

**1938 Haripura session:** Elected President of the INC — his first term

**1939 Tripuri session:** Re-elected INC President, defeating **Pattabhi Sitaramayya** (Gandhi's preferred candidate) by 1,580 votes to 1,377 — one of the most dramatic elections in Congress history

The 1939 re-election created an open rupture with Gandhi. Bose's vision was of a more confrontational, deadline-driven approach to independence. Unable to form a working committee acceptable to the Gandhian leadership, he **resigned the presidentship** and formed the **Forward Bloc** within the Congress in **1939**, advocating for a broad left-nationalist front.

## THE GREAT ESCAPE (JANUARY 16, 1941)

Placed under house arrest by the British at his Elgin Road residence in Calcutta, Bose staged one of the most daring escapes in the history of Indian nationalism on the **night of January 16–17, 1941**. Disguised as an insurance agent named "Ziauddin," he travelled by car to Gomoh (now Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose Gomoh station in Jharkhand), then by train to Peshawar, and onward through Afghanistan to the Soviet Union and then to Germany.

This journey — through foreign territory, disguised, without the colonial government suspecting — demonstrated the personal courage that would define his subsequent years.

## GERMANY, INA, AND AZAD HIND

In Germany, Bose organised the **Indian Legion** (Indische Legion) from Indian prisoners of war captured by Rommel's Afrika Korps and from Indian workers in Europe. He met **Adolf Hitler in 1942** and lobbied — largely unsuccessfully — for a joint declaration of Indian independence from the Axis powers.

Recognising that Germany was not the right platform, Bose undertook a remarkable **submarine journey** from Germany to Japan (via the Indian Ocean), becoming one of the few people to transfer between German and Japanese submarines at sea. He arrived in **Southeast Asia in 1943**.

In **Southeast Asia**, he took over the **Indian National Army (INA)** — originally organised by **Mohan Singh** in 1942 from Indian POWs of the Singapore campaign. Bose reorganised, expanded, and inspired the INA, turning it into a fighting force of 40,000+ soldiers drawn from Indian communities across Southeast

Asia.

On **October 21, 1943**, Bose proclaimed the **Azad Hind Provisional Government** (Free India Government) in **Singapore**, with himself as Head of State, Prime Minister, and Minister of War. The government was recognised by the Axis powers and a handful of other nations.

**Andaman & Nicobar Islands:** The Japanese allowed Bose to administer the islands nominally. He renamed them “**Shaheed Dweep**” (Martyrs’ Island — now Neil Island) and “**Swaraj Dweep**” (Self-Rule Island — now Havelock Island). On **December 30, 1943**, Bose hoisted the Indian Tricolour at Port Blair — the first time the Indian flag flew on Indian soil, even if under Japanese occupation.

## THE INA CAMPAIGN AND ITS LEGACY

The INA’s **Imphal-Kohima campaign (1944)** — in cooperation with the Japanese — aimed to enter Indian territory and spark a mass uprising. Despite early advances and the famous cry “**Delhi Chalو!**” (March to Delhi!), the campaign failed due to Allied superiority in the air, logistics failures, the monsoon, and Japanese reverses elsewhere.

As Japan’s war effort collapsed in 1945, the INA disintegrated. Bose was reportedly killed in a **plane crash in Taiwan on August 18, 1945** — a death that has remained controversial for decades.

**INA Trials and National Impact (1945–46):** The British decision to try INA officers — including **Shah Nawaz Khan, P.K. Sehgal, and Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon** — at the **Red Fort** in Delhi backfired spectacularly. The trials galvanised Indian public opinion across religious and political lines. **Bhulabhai Desai** led the defence. The outpouring of sympathy for the INA defendants, and the Royal Indian Navy Mutiny of 1946, convinced British leaders that the loyalty of the Indian armed forces could no longer be assumed — a key factor in accelerating the transfer of power.

## DEATH AND THE CONTROVERSY

Three major inquiries have examined Netaji’s death:

**Shah Nawaz Committee (1956):** Concluded Bose died in the Taiwan plane crash

**Khosla Commission (1970):** Confirmed death in the crash

**Mukherjee Commission (2006):** Cast doubt on the plane crash theory; noted discrepancies in Japanese records; declared the ashes at Renkoji Temple in Tokyo unverified as Bose’s

The controversy has never been fully resolved. In 2015, the Central Government declassified and made public 100 files related to Netaji — a step toward transparency, though definitive answers remain elusive.

## PARAKRAM DIWAS

The Central Government declared **January 23 as Parakram Diwas** (Day of Courage) in 2021, beginning with Netaji's 125th birth anniversary. The choice of "Parakram" — courage, martial prowess — reflects Bose's personal legacy of choosing action over caution.

**2026 (129th anniversary):** Central venue at **Sri Vijaya Puram (formerly Port Blair)**, the site of his historic flag hoisting. Events organised by the Ministry of Culture at 14 locations across India, including the National Archives of India's exhibition "Subhash Abhinandan."

## UPSC RELEVANCE

*Born January 23, 1897, Cuttack; ICS 4th rank 1920; resigned ICS 1921; Congress President 1938 (Haripura) + 1939 (Tripuri); founded Forward Bloc 1939; Great Escape January 16–17, 1941; INA reorganised 1943; Azad Hind Govt October 21, 1943 (Singapore); Shaheed Dweep = Neil Island; Swaraj Dweep = Havelock Island; Tricolour hoisted Port Blair December 30, 1943; Taiwan plane crash August 18, 1945; Parakram Diwas declared 2021.*

*Netaji's role in freedom struggle; INA trials as catalyst for independence; debate between armed struggle and non-violent resistance; Bose vs Gandhi — ideological differences and Congress split of 1939.*

## ★ FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA

### NETAJI — LIFE DATA:

Born: **January 23, 1897**, Cuttack, Odisha

Father: Janakinath Bose | Mother: Prabhavati Devi

ICS examination rank: **4th** (1920); resigned 1921

Congress President: **1938** (Haripura) + **1939** (Tripuri — defeated Pattabhi Sitaramayya)

Forward Bloc founded: **1939**

“Great Escape” from Calcutta: **January 16–17, 1941**

INA reorganised under Netaji: **1943**

Azad Hind Govt proclaimed: **October 21, 1943**, Singapore

Tricolour hoisted at Port Blair: **December 30, 1943**

Last confirmed sighting: Taiwan, **August 18, 1945** (plane crash — disputed)

Parakram Diwas declared: **January 23, 2021**

### FAMOUS QUOTES:

“**Give me blood, and I will give you freedom**”

“**Jai Hind**” (his signature salutation)

“**Delhi Chalo!**” (INA battle cry)

### INA KEY FACTS:

INA original formation: 1942, **Mohan Singh** (from Indian POWs after Singapore fall)

Netaji took over INA: **1943** from Rash Behari Bose

INA strength: 40,000–45,000 soldiers

Imphal-Kohima campaign: **1944** (Operation U-Go)

INA trials at **Red Fort**: 1945–46; defence led by **Bhulabhai Desai**

Key accused: Shah Nawaz Khan, P.K. Sehgal, Gurbaksh Singh Dhillon

### INQUIRIES INTO NETAJI’S DEATH:

Shah Nawaz Committee: **1956** — confirmed Taiwan crash

Khosla Commission: **1970** — confirmed Taiwan crash

Mukherjee Commission: **2006** — cast doubt; remains controversial

Files declassified by Central Govt: **2015** (100 files)

### REPUBLIC DAY 2026 — PARAKRAM DIWAS:

Central venue: **Sri Vijaya Puram** (formerly Port Blair), A&N Islands

Duration: **January 23–25, 2026**

Chief Guest (Jan 23): LG Admiral **D.K. Joshi**

Events at **14 locations** across India

Exhibition: “Subhash Abhinandan” by National Archives of India

### OTHER RELEVANT FACTS:

India’s first Prime Minister **Jawaharlal Nehru** presided over Lahore INC session (1929) — Purna Swaraj; Bose was a key supporter

Rash Behari Bose (not related to Netaji): Indian revolutionary who organized INA structure in Japan/SE Asia; handed over leadership to Netaji

Singapore fall: **February 15, 1942** — largest British surrender in history; ~85,000 Allied POWs

Cellular Jail, Port Blair: “Kaala Paani” — where freedom fighters were imprisoned; now a national memorial

Sources: PIB, The Hindu, National Archives of India

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