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First Women NDA Cadets Commissioned at the Indian Military Academy

13 June 2026

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CURATED & WRITTEN BY

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First Women NDA Cadets Commissioned at the Indian Military Academy

13 June 2026 · 4 min read · ·

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WHY IN NEWS

On **June 13, 2026**, **President Droupadi Murmu**, the Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, reviewed the **Passing-Out Parade** of the **158th Regular Course** and **141st Technical Graduates Course** at the **Indian Military Academy (IMA), Dehradun**. For the first time since the IMA was founded in 1932, the commissioned officers included **women cadets who entered the armed forces through the National Defence Academy (NDA)**, a milestone that completes a path opened by the judiciary.

WHAT HAPPENED

DETAIL	PARTICULARS
Event	IMA Passing-Out Parade, Spring Term 2026
Courses	158th Regular Course and 141st Technical Graduates Course
Cadets commissioned	515, including 8 women from the NDA route
Rank conferred	Lieutenant (Indian Army)
Reviewing Officer	President Droupadi Murmu
Institution	Indian Military Academy, Dehradun (founded 1932)

These women were part of the **first batch of women admitted to the NDA** in 2022, who trained at the NDA in Khadakwasla and then completed the final year of pre-commission training at the IMA. Their commissioning marks the moment the NDA-to-IMA pipeline, the traditional route for permanent-cadre Army officers, became fully open to women.

THE ROAD THAT LED HERE

The change is the product of a sustained line of litigation and judicial intervention, not an administrative decision alone.

MILESTONE	SIGNIFICANCE
Babita Puniya case (2020)	The Supreme Court held that women Short Service Commission officers are entitled to Permanent Commission on par with men, rejecting “physiological” and “social” arguments as stereotypes
NDA order (August 2021)	In the line of litigation associated with Kush Kalra v. Union of India , the Supreme Court directed that women be allowed to sit the NDA examination , calling the earlier bar a matter of “gender discrimination”
First women NDA batch (2022)	Women were admitted to the NDA for the first time, beginning the three-year journey to commissioning
2026 commissioning	The first of those women are commissioned as Army officers via the IMA

The constitutional anchor is **Articles 14, 15 and 16**: equality before the law, the prohibition of discrimination on grounds of sex, and equality of opportunity in public employment. The Court read the armed forces’ recruitment rules against these guarantees and found the exclusion of women indefensible.

THE WIDER PICTURE OF WOMEN IN THE FORCES

- Women already serve in a growing list of roles, including as fighter pilots in the Indian Air Force (since 2016), in the Army’s Corps of Military Police, and in artillery.
- Permanent Commission and command appointments for women officers followed the 2020 judgment.
- The combat arms (infantry, armoured corps) remain a live policy question, weighed against operational, infrastructure and physiological considerations.

THE ANALYSIS: EQUALITY THROUGH INSTITUTIONS

This is a case study in how **constitutional rights translate into institutional change**, often through the courts.

- 1 **Judicial review as an equality engine.** The forces’ own rules were the barrier; it was judicial interpretation of Articles 14 to 16 that dismantled it. This illustrates the judiciary’s role in enforcing fundamental rights against entrenched practice.

- ② **From access to assimilation.** Admission is the first step; genuine equality requires parity in accommodation, postings, command opportunities and an institutional culture that treats women officers as a norm, not an exception.
- ③ **The combat-arms frontier.** The next debate is whether and how women enter the combat arms, balancing the equality principle against operational arguments, a question several democracies have navigated differently.

The way forward is to consolidate the gain: ensure infrastructure parity, track command-appointment outcomes, and treat the integration of women through the premier NDA-IMA route as the new baseline rather than a one-time headline.

UPSC RELEVANCE

- **GS Paper 2 (Polity):** fundamental rights (Articles 14, 15, 16), the role of the judiciary in enforcing equality, landmark judgments.
- **GS Paper 1 (Society):** the role of women, gender and institutions.
- **Prelims:** IMA founding year, the sequence of judgments, the reviewing authority at the parade.
- **Essay:** “Equality is not a privilege to be granted but a right to be realised.”

FACTS CORNER

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THE EVENT:

IMA Passing-Out Parade, June 13, 2026; 158th Regular Course + 141st Technical Graduates Course
515 cadets commissioned, including 8 women from the NDA route; reviewed by President Droupadi Murmu

THE INSTITUTION:

Indian Military Academy, Dehradun, founded 1932; commissions officers into the Army's permanent cadre

THE LEGAL PATH:

Babita Puniya case (2020): Permanent Commission for women on par with men
NDA opened to women by the Supreme Court in 2021; first women NDA batch admitted 2022
Constitutional anchor: Articles 14, 15, 16

RELATED MILESTONES:

Women IAF fighter pilots since 2016; women in Corps of Military Police and artillery

Sources: *The Hindu*, PIB

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