

UK Chief of the Air Staff in India to strengthen military ties

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The UK's Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Harv Smyth is in India to boost military ties between the two countries.

The United Kingdom's Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), Air Chief Marshal Sir Harv Smyth is in India to boost military ties between the two countries in the face of emerging security challenges.

The CAS began his three-day visit by paying homage to the fallen soldiers at the National War Memorial and reviewed the Guard of Honour by the Indian Air Force (IAF).

He met India's Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh to discuss evolving security threats and ways to further strengthen the partnership between the two air forces, which has soared to new heights with recent joint training and educational exchanges.

In February this year, the UK and India signed an agreement under which the Indian Air Force will deploy three Qualified Flying Instructors to Royal Air Force (RAF) Valley in the UK – the training base for British fast jet pilots. The two air chiefs will travel to Air Force Station Gwalior to understand IAF's operational procedures and best practices in countering new-age aerial threats.

Air Chief Marshall Sir Harv Smyth, Chief of the Air Staff, said:

It is a privilege to visit India and further strengthen our defence partnership, hosted by my esteemed colleague and good friend, Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh. The planned arrival this September of Indian Air Force Qualified Flying Instructors at RAF Valley - joining the IAF instructor already contributing at RAF College Cranwell - illustrates the depth of trust, shared professionalism, and mutual commitment that underpin our relationship.

These exchanges, together with our expanding training and operational cooperation, demonstrate the enduring bonds between the Royal Air Force and the Indian Air Force, and our shared dedication to security, stability, and technological excellence. I look forward to building on this momentum and continuing to deepen the cooperation between our air forces in the years ahead.

Commodore Chris Saunders MBE Royal Navy, Defence Adviser, British High Commission, said:

This visit by the UK Chief of the Air Staff emphasises the significance of the UK-India defence relationship and the continued momentum with which it is building.

Embedding IAF instructors within our instructor cadre at RAF Valley and RAF College Cranwell, as well as those from other Services, alongside increasingly complex air exercising and multi domain cooperation, represents a tangible and substantive strengthening of defence ties in all domains.

As the fourth and most senior flag-rank visitor from the UK to India in 2026, this visit clearly signals the strategic importance both nations place on developing a strong defence partnership.

During the visit, the CAS is also expected to hold discussions with other members of India's civil and military leadership.

Further information:

- This is the fourth visit by a senior flag-rank officer from the UK to India in 2026.
- In addition to RAF Valley, an IAF instructor is also deployed at RAF College Cranwell.
- The Britannia Royal Naval College Dartmouth has an officer from the Indian Navy as one of its instructors since May 2024. This development was followed by the deployment of an Indian Army officer to Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in May 2025 as an instructor.
- In 2025, the UK and India conducted the largest ever maritime exercise involving the Carrier Strike Groups (CSG) of both the navies. The CSG engagement also included a separate air defence exercise, involving fast jet aircraft from the Royal Navy, Indian Air Force and Indian Navy.
- This was closely followed by joint army exercise Ajeya Warrior in Rajasthan where 2nd Royal Gurkha Rifles exercised with the 21 Sikh Regiment.
- In 2023, the Indian Air Force participated in the UK's multi-lateral air exercise Cobra Warrior for the first time. In 2024, the Royal Air Force was amongst the participants for IAF's first multi-lateral air combat exercise Tarang Shakti.

Media

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