

Students honour 1971 war veterans



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Siliguri: Marking the 50th anniversary of the birth of Bangladesh and the 13-day Indo-Pak war of 1971, a group of college students organised a felicitation program for war veterans on 18th December 2021.

Leading a group of six veterans, as well as a war widow was 86-year old Hon Cap S.B. Chhetri, who belonged to 5/11 Gorkha Rifles who were part of the decisive battle of Bogra to capture Dhaka, then the capital of East Pakistan.

Other eminent veterans present were Hawaldar Duryodhan Tamang (Army Corps of Engineers); Hon Capt Hemant Subba; Subedar Bijai Kumar Subba Sena Medal; Hav M Gautam Tamang; Subedar Tilak Ram Chhetri, and war widow Mrs Ishadevi Thapa, representing late Sub SB Thapa.

Three of these veterans present were of the valorous 5/11 Gorkha Rifles regiment.

The 5/11 Gorkha Rifles is a Gorkha regiment of the Indian Army that was re-raised after Independence of India. The regiment consists primarily of the Kirant Tribes Rai, Limbu, Yakkha, Sunuwar of Eastern Nepal, Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Dooars of West Bengal, Sikkim and other parts of Northeast India.

During the Indo-Pakistani War of 1971, the 5th battalion was involved in the action to fight against West Pakistan in East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), fetching the unit battle honour Bogra and theater honour East Pakistan.

Also present at the event were members of the Assam Rifles 101 regiment instrumental in their entry through Dowki.

“The National Service Scheme Unit II members of Salesian College Siliguri came up with this concept to pay homage to war veterans and mark the Vijay Diwas,” said NSS Program Officer at Salesian College Siliguri Pinak Dey, Assistant Professor of Education.

Vijay Diwas was observed on December 16 to honour the martyrs who lost their lives in the India-Pakistan war of 1971.

The veterans were offered a plaque of appreciation which reads : “With our greatest appreciation, Salesian College Siliguri, NSS Unit 2, presents this memento to Salbari Purva Sainik Ardha Sainik Kalyan Samiti in recognition of their timeless service to the country on the occasion of Vijay Diwas commemorating the 50th year of India's victory in the Indo Pak War of 1971.”

The president of the veteran’s club Captain Hemant Subba regaled incidents of the war days and recalled Field Marshal Sam “Bahadur” Manekshaw and his appreciation of the valour of the Gorkhas.

Indo-Pak War legend General Manekshaw is credited saying, “If a man says he is not afraid of death, he is either lying, or a Gorkha.”

CM Paul

Former HoD, Dept of Mass Communications at Assam Don Bosco University, Guwahati, C.M. Paul was editor of The Herald weekly in Kolkata and director of Don Bosco International News Agency (ANS) based in Rome. He did MA in Journalism & Mass Communication from FORDHAM University, New York.

BY CM PAUL

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