

FORT WILLIAM : HISTORY

NEWS: *Fort William, Army's Eastern HQ, renamed Vijay Durg*

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The **Eastern Army Command headquarters at Fort William, Kolkata, has been renamed Vijay Durg** as part of India's effort to remove colonial legacies from the armed forces. Additionally, **Kitchener House is now Manekshaw House, and the South Gate is renamed Shivaji Gate.**

1. Renaming of Fort William Headquarters

- **What Happened?**
 - The **headquarters of the Eastern Army Command** in Kolkata has been renamed "**Vijay Durg.**"
 - **Kitchener House** (previously named after Lord Kitchener) is now **Manekshaw House**, honoring **Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw**.
 - The **South Gate** of the fort is now called **Shivaji Gate**, referring to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj.
- **Why was it Renamed?**
 - Part of a broader initiative to **eliminate colonial influences** in the Indian Armed Forces.
 - Inspired by the **historic Vijaydurg Fort in Maharashtra**, which served as a **Maratha naval base** during the 17th-18th centuries.



2. Historical Background of Fort William

- **Established by the British East India Company (1696-1700)** as a strategic military base on the **eastern bank of the Hooghly River in Kolkata.**

- **Original Fort:** A two-storied brick structure completed in 1700 and named after **King William III** of England.
- **Reconstruction:**
 - After the **Battle of Plassey (1757)**, the old fort was found to be inadequate.
 - A **new, larger Fort William** was built between **1758-1781** under **Robert Clive**.
 - It became a key British military center, controlling Bengal's commercial and military affairs.

3. Transformation of Fort William Over Time

- **British Era:**
 - Served as a **strategic defense base** to protect British economic interests.
 - Associated with the infamous **Black Hole Tragedy (1756)** when Nawab Siraj-ud-Daulah's forces captured British soldiers.
- **Post-Independence (1947-Present):**
 - After India's independence, it became the **Eastern Command Headquarters of the Indian Army**.
 - Several **modern facilities and military installations** were added.
 - **Restricted to civilians** due to its **military significance**.
- **Notable Features:**
 - **Ball Tower:** Once part of a British-era communication system.
 - **Vijay Smarak:** A memorial honoring Indian war martyrs.

4. Related Military Reforms to Remove Colonial Legacy

- **Naval Ensign Change (September 2022):**
 - The Indian Navy **removed the British-era St. George's Cross** and introduced a **new ensign inspired by Chhatrapati Shivaji's seal**.
- **Beating Retreat Ceremony Changes:**
 - Traditional **British military tunes** were replaced with **Indian compositions** to reflect national identity.

5. Robert Clive and His Role in Bengal's History

- **Early Military Career:**
 - Captured by the French in **1746 (First Carnatic War)** but later **escaped to Fort St. David, Cuddalore**.
 - **1751:** Successfully defended Arcot (capital of Carnatic), proving his **strategic brilliance**.
- **Control Over Bengal:**
 - **Battle of Plassey (1757):** Defeated **Siraj-ud-Daulah**, establishing British dominance in Bengal.
 - **Governorship of Bengal:** Held twice (**1757-1760 & 1765-1767**).
 - **Post-Battle of Buxar (1764):**

- Returned to India in **1765** after British victory in the **Battle of Buxar**.
- **Treaty of Allahabad (1765)**: Signed with **Nawab Shuja-ud-Daula (Awadh)** and **Mughal Emperor Shah Alam II**.
- Introduced the **Dual Government System in Bengal**:
- **East India Company** controlled revenue (**Diwani**) and **administration (Nizamat)**.
- The Nawab retained **nominal authority but depended on British support**.
- **Abolished by Warren Hastings in 1772**.

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/fort-william-armys-eastern-hq-renamed-vijay-durg/article69184172.ece>