



Brigadier Cyrus Addie Pithawalla

Ashoka Chakra Awardee Brigadier Cyrus Addie Pithawalla was approved for the next rank of a Major-General and posted as the general-officer-commanding of the Andhra Sub-Area earlier this week.

The medals themselves are rare and despite being on the war path and involved in multiple heavy armed insurgencies since 1947, India has only honoured 21 citizens with

the Param Vir Chakra and 60 citizens with its peace time equivalent the Ashoka Chakra. Most of these awards have been bestowed posthumously as the recipients laid down their lives fighting the enemy. The ones who survived never went beyond the rank of Colonel. This is the first time an awardee from 3 decades ago has breached this inexplicable glass ceiling. Brig Pithawalla has become the first Ashoka Chakra become a two-star general.

A top gallantry medal is not an open ticket to a higher rank like commanding a brigade, division or corps. The most important criterion for promotion remains the Annual Confidential Reports of the officer.

Brig Pithawalla, as a Second-Lieutenant leading a company of his 17 J&K Rifles in July 1981, had

conducted a daring raid on a hideout of the People's Liberation Army, leading to the capture of the insurgent outfit's chief N. Bisheshwar Singh and death of seven militants. Despite being hit in the right shoulder by bullets, he refused to be evacuated till the entire operation was over. He was awarded the Ashoka Chakra during the 1982 Republic Day parade.

