

CITATION

SHAURYA CHAKRA **LIEUTENANT BIMAL RANJAN BEHERA (09883-K)**



On 06 Mar 23 ONGC reported an operational emergency and sought Indian Navy's diving assistance urgently. Armada Sterling V, a Fuel Production Storage and Offloading (FPSO) vessel deployed off Kakinada for a major Offshore development project, critical for the nation's Energy Security, had to abruptly suspend operations due to entanglement of fishing nets at the Fuel Extraction Mechanism. Lt Bimal Ranjan Behera was part of the Diving team deployed to render assistance. At the FPSO, a vertical dive of 18 feet to bilge keel followed by horizontal dive of 100 feet athwart ships was required to reach the turret to restore operations. The underwater conditions were perilous. The vessel's complex u/w fitments, menacing currents, sharp barnacles and the bulbous bow presented a ferocious waterbody. Diving to depths of even few feet was gravely risky. Divers were unable to merely stabilise. Lt Bimal Ranjan Behera stepped up fearlessly as lead diver. At about 1000h on 12 Mar 23 as soon as the officer dived, the waters brutally assaulted him, throwing him bodily aft leaving him instantly breathless. The officer gallantly fought against these ruthless waters and descended 18 feet to reach the bilge keel. Without respite the officer continued diving. As the enormous turbulence swirled and pushed, he precariously hung onto the bottom chain, hauled himself and the long umbilical, advancing barely few inches at a time, and successfully reached the turret area traversing 100 feet athwart ships. Fighting complete exhaustion, the officer extricated the nets around turret and cleared the bell mouths one by one. Realising that orienting and clearing the turret by another diver would be risky, the officer shouldered bulk of diving efforts himself during this gruelling diving operation. He repeatedly dived 16 times for 552 minutes in two phases, negotiating the complex underwater fitments as also the sharp cuts inflicted by barnacles and cleared the nets around the turret. Subsequently, braving the whirlpools, the officer dived and videographed under the turret. This offered an accurate underwater picture. The complex Fuel Extraction Equipment was

extricated of the nets and seamless installation of additional underwater fuel lines was enabled. This act of the officer was much beyond the call of duty. For the officer's selfless act and raw courage with utter disregard to personal safety in an extremely hostile diving operation which brought to closure ONGC's emergency, Lt Bimal Ranjan Behera is strongly recommended for award of Shaurya Chakra.