Battle of Basantar, 1971

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Why in News?

Titled Ikkis (Twenty-one), the film hit theatres on New Year's Day and traces the valiant journey of Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal, who laid down his life in the 1971 India-Pakistan war.

- **Battle of Basantar –** It was fought on the Western Front of India during the ***Indo-Pak war of 1971***.
- **Location – *Shakargarh Buldge***, a strategic area in the Punjab & Jammu Sector, with road links important for both India and Pakistan.

  *The **Basantar River** is a tributary of the Ravi, flowing through Shakargarh in North Punjab.*

- It is considered to be one of the ***Fiercest Tank battles*** ever fought between two countries.
- **The Minefield Challenge -** The 9th Engineer Regiment (known as the "Thambi Regiment") performed a legendary feat by manually and trawl-clearing deep minefields (over 1,400 metres) under heavy fire to allow Indian tanks to advance.
- It was a ***decisive Indian victory*** that secured the vital Pathankot–Jammu axis, preventing Pakistan from cutting off Jammu and Kashmir from the rest of India.
- **Heroes and Honours -** The battle is renowned for extraordinary acts of gallantry, resulting in two Param Vir Chakras (PVC), India's highest military decoration.
  - 2nd Lt. Arun Khetarpal (Posthumous).
  - Major Hoshiar Singh.

Quick Fact

Second Lieutenant Arun Khetarpal

• **Early Life** – He was born on October 14, 1950, in Pune into a distinguished military family.
• **Commissioning** – After joining the National Defence Academy in 1967, he was commissioned into the ***17 Poona Horse*** Battalions on June 13, 1971.
• During the 1971 Indo-Pak War, he commanded two tanks against a superior Pakistani force.
• He died in the war on December 16, 1971, a day before the ceasefire.
• **Award –** He was posthumously awarded the ***Param Vir Chakra***, India's highest wartime gallantry award (the ***youngest Param Vir Chakra awardee***).
• He is remembered as a symbol of courage and sacrifice in Indian military history.

References

1. Indian Express | Ikkis: Real-life story of Arun Khetarpal
2. Aviation Defence Universe | Battle of Basantar 1971 War

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