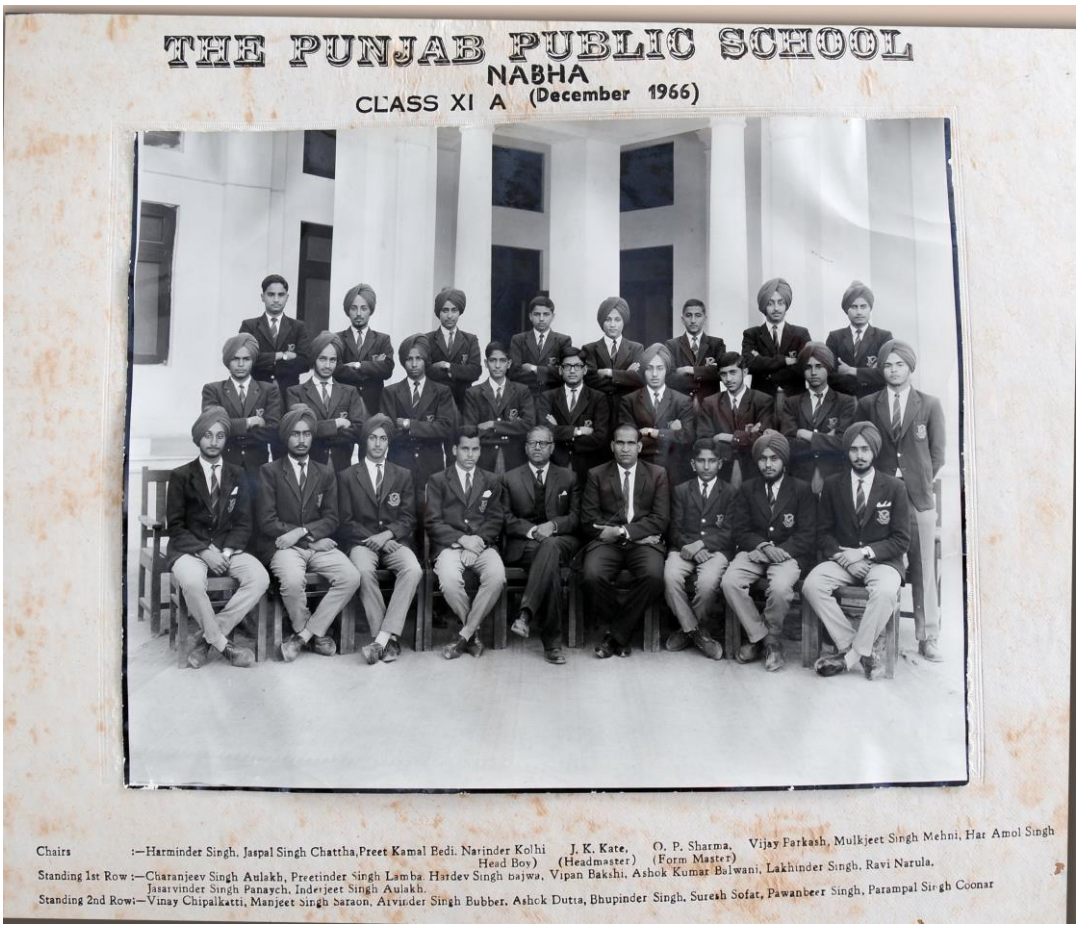
A Diamond Reunion: Sixty Years and Beyond

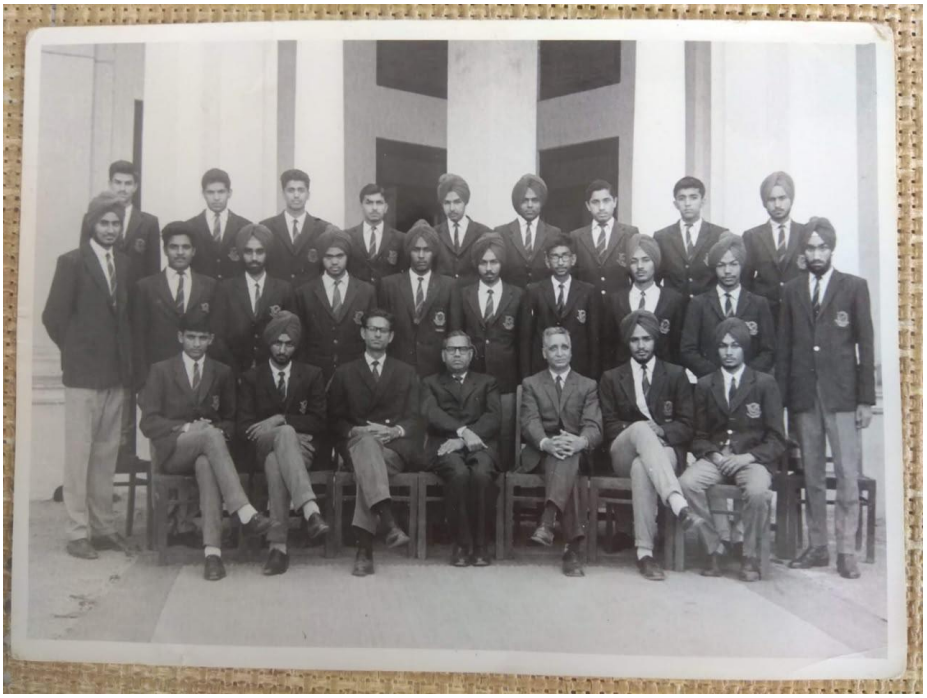
The Background

Last year, the boys from the 1964 and earlier batches came together for a Diamond Reunion, more than sixty years after their schooldays. Their numbers were small, reflecting the modest size of classes in the school's early years. In 1960, for instance, only 120 boys had been admitted to Classes V to VIII. To felicitate these senior Old Nabhaites and give them a memorable experience, some of us old Nabhaites from the Tricity who had studied at PPS during the 1960s hosted a successful dinner for them at Basantar, Panchkula.

In October 2026, when the 1966 batch decided to celebrate its own Diamond Reunion, it faced a similar situation. More than sixty years had passed, and time had inevitably taken its toll. Some classmates, all now over 76, had passed away; a few were unwell, with one recovering from open-heart surgery; others were living abroad, a few were out of contact, while some could not attend for reasons beyond their control.



XI A, December,1966, ISC. At least ten of whom are no more. One is out of contact.



XI B H.Sc., March 1967 Five of them are no more and two are not in contact.

To make the occasion more memorable, the batch decided to invite local Old Nabhaites from the Tricity who had studied at PPS during the 1960s to join them for a contributory dinner on Sunday, 11 October, at KOI, Chandi Mandir. The idea was to recreate, even if only for an evening, the camaraderie and ethos of The Punjab Public School, Nabha, as remembered by those who had shared its life in the 1960s.

The response was heartening. Almost everyone contacted accepted the invitation and confirmed their participation. The turnout was remarkable: although the dinner was contributory and no advance payment was required, everyone who had confirmed attended. Indeed, at least four Old Nabhaites who had not confirmed their attendance also turned up.

The arrangements were coordinated by Brig Yashpal Samyal (S-43) and Col Jagjit Soharu (B-30), who managed the entire exercise from Gurugram through WhatsApp and telephone calls. They were ably supported by Harikirtan Singh (S-24) and Arvinder Bubber (J-44), both chartered accountants based in Canada. Major General Prince Duggal (R-493), the Area Commander, ensured that the KOI venue was made available for the evening, while Lt Gen RS Sujlana (B-134) arranged the booking. Their collective efforts helped turn a simple reunion into a memorable gathering.



A mixed group photo

An Evening of Reunion and Reminiscences

Dinner was scheduled for 7.30 pm. The members of the 1966 batch began arriving around 7 pm, giving themselves time to exchange greetings, indulge in the familiar back-slapping and *jhappies*, and revive old *yaari* before the other guests arrived. Many were meeting one another after years—more than fifty years in some cases. It was a wise decision to arrive early!

Old Nabhaites from other batches began trickling in, and within minutes there was a steady stream of arrivals. The atmosphere soon came alive with familiar faces, warm embraces and animated conversations. Not a single person who had confirmed attendance was absent, while a few who had not confirmed also made it a point to join in. The gathering eventually numbered nearly 40.

A particularly heart-warming presence was that of **Mrs KPK Tandon**, known to the reunion batch as Miss Pannu in 1960. Her presence was a reminder of the teachers whose affection, guidance and dedication had helped shape the lives of the school's early students.

The invitation extended to her read:

"We, the founding students who were the first to join the Sainik School, Nabha (later rechristened as Punjab Public School), in Class V in 1960 and passed out in 1966/67, are getting together to celebrate our Diamond Jubilee dinner on 11–12 October 2026.

Since you were one of the revered teachers under whose love, care and dedication we blossomed at PPS, it would be our pleasure if you could join us in celebrating this grand event over dinner to be held at KOI, Chandi Mandir at 7.30pm on Sunday, 11th of October".

Mr OP Bhatnagar, the only other surviving teacher from 1960, sent a warm message of greetings and blessings:

"My dear Nabhaites of Class V of 1960, my hearty greetings and best wishes for a lovely get-together. Have grand celebrations and jubilations on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee of your being in such a great school in 1960. Sing and dance to glory and remember the good old days of PPS.

I am sure you must have all done well in your career. I offer my best wishes to each one of you. May God give you the best of health, wealth, peace and prosperity. My choicest blessings are always with you and with every member of your family."

OP Bhatnagar
(Art and Hindi, 1960–1971)

The Spirit of PPS Lives On

The reunion was soon in full swing. Old friendships were renewed, and relationships that had lain dormant for decades were rekindled. Two hours of lively conversation and reminiscences passed all too quickly, with the tempo rising afresh whenever another familiar face arrived. For a while, it felt as though everyone had been transported back to school, surrounded once again by faces that had once been an everyday part of life at Nabha.

Time, of course, had left its mark on everyone. Yet the determination of so many to attend, despite health concerns and the infirmities of age, was a testament to the enduring bonds forged at school.

Lt Gen Tej Sapru (S-42), despite the limitations following a stroke, made it a point to attend. Gurinder Dhanoa (S-9), who has not been enjoying the best of health, arrived walking with the aid of a stick. KS Sujlana (B-134), once a merchant ship's captain, attended despite having undergone stomach surgery. Jatinder Randhawa (J-60), who has faced health challenges over the past few years, was there in his usual jovial spirit. Col Rupinder Dhillon (B-68) arrived with the aid of a stick, just one month after knee-replacement surgery. Brig Julka (J-101), who had returned that very morning from the Asian Games, did not want to miss the occasion. Ranjit Pal Mann (R-14), the Head Boy and a legendary sportsman of the school's early years, travelled from Delhi with his better half. Each arrival reinforced the same message: age may slow the body, but it cannot easily diminish the affection and loyalty that bind Old Nabhaites together.



Col Manbir Hundal, Mrs Ranjtpal , Mrs Dhanoa and Gurinder Dhanoa

Four Roll of Honour Awardees

Four recipients of the PPS Roll of Honour were present; each having made a mark in his respective field.

1. Lt Gen Tej Sapru (S-42, 1964)

Former Western Army Commander, member of the Board of Governors of PPS and former President of ONA.

2. Gurinder Dhanoa (S-9, 1964)

The first IPS officer from the school. He went on to serve as Director General of Police and held a senior position in RAW, reporting to the Cabinet. After retirement, he served as Security Adviser to the Prime Minister of Mauritius.

3. Lt Gen Rajinder Sujlana (B-134)

Former Commandant of the Indian Military Academy and Chairman of the Punjab Public Service Commission.

4. Arvinder Singh Bubber (J-44, 1966)

A member of the reunion batch, he holds Chartered Accountancy qualifications from the UK and Canada and runs his own accountancy firm. He remains active on the boards of several charitable and trade organisations. He also served on the board of Kwantlen University in British Columbia and as its Vice-Chairman.

Incidentally, the fifth, **Gen Jatinder Bajwa (J-151)** ruled himself out just the day before as he had to rush to Jalandhar.

Old Nabhaites Who Made It a Point to Attend

The gathering was enriched by Old Nabhaites from several batches, each bringing his own memories, experiences and achievements.

The Seniors: 1965

Ranjit Pal Mann (R-14)

The Head Boy and a legendary sportsman of his time, Ranjit Pal was a versatile centre-half in both hockey and football. He seemed to be everywhere on the field, defending effectively and executing precise through-passes to his forwards.

A great athlete, he went on to represent St Stephen's College, Delhi University and the state. He ultimately became an Asian Games silver medallist. His university and state record stood for decades before it was broken. He did not join IPS (around 1970) for which he was selected as he wanted to join IAS. Instead preferred to join the Army.

Group Captain KS Rana (R-41)

Another outstanding sportsman, he was a mercurial left-in in the hockey team, whose dribbling skills could carry the ball deep into an opponent's D. He was instrumental in the school's success against a visiting Doon School team. While posted at Safdarjung Delhi, he took many an old Nabhaite for a spin in the sky.

Brig Harbax Gill (S-99)

A school prefect, avid golfer and adventurer, he is an accomplished mountaineer, rafter and angler, with a particular penchant for fishing in high-mountain streams. He is one of the triumvirate that has been backbone of the PPS Golf which has become an annual event at Chandi mandir. Others are Gen TK Sapru and Col Karan Thandi.



Bikram Dev Singh, Brig Harbax Gill, Lt Gen Sujlana, Gen Sapru and Brig Julka.



Ranjit Pal Mann (1965), Col HS Chahal (1967), Brig HS Bedi(1968) and Gp Capt KS Rana (1965).

The Juniors: 1967

Col Harjit Singh Chahal (J-49)

Former Commanding Officer of the Scinde Horse and a school prefect in his time. Always game for an ONA get together.

Dr Jashanjot Singh, MD (S-52, 1967)

After leaving PPS, he joined the Armed Forces Medical College, Pune, and subsequently became a radiologist. He was the first to introduce ultrasound in Punjab at DMC, Ludhiana. He is credited with strengthening ONA and fostering closer bonds among Old Nabhaites. ONA honoured him for his contributions.

Dr Bharat Bhushan Aggarwal (R-71)

A graduate of IIT Kharagpur with a doctorate from Boston University, he was part of a team that designed special ball bearings for spacecraft intended to land on the ground in the USA.

Col Rupinder Dhillon (B-68)

An ace swimmer, he represented the Patiala district swimming team and went on to win the NDA Blue, as well as awards for Best Swimmer and Best Diver. He also represented NDA in water polo.



Dr Bharat Bhushan Aggarwal, Arvinder S Bubber, Col Jagjit S Soharu, Dr Jashanjot Singh Bhangu and Brig Yashpal Samyal.



Col JS Randhawa and Col Rupinder Dhillon with stick

The 1968 Batch

Brig HS Bedi (R-58)

Former President of ONA, he is a go-getter involved in a variety of social activities, including cycling, car rallies, acting in social dramas and films. He has also been responsible for popularising pickleball and its competitions in the region.

Col JS Randhawa (J-60)

An accomplished car driver, he has participated in numerous national-level car rallies and secured a third position during his rallying career. Perhaps his experience of driving tanks in the Armoured Corps helped hone his driving skills!

Hardarshan Virk (B-87)

A nephew of Mr GS Punia, the school's Bursar, he was an ace swimmer at PPS. He went on to represent Government College for Boys, Chandigarh, and captained the Punjab University swimming and water-polo teams.



AS Bubber, Hardarshan Virk and Bharat Bhushan

The 1969 Batch

Wg Cdr Bikram Dev Singh (S-84)

A recipient of the Shaurya Chakra for gallantry in peacetime, he left the Air Force despite having been approved for promotion to Group Captain. After retirement, he flew French Dauphin helicopters to offshore oil rigs. He subsequently joined Deccan Airways and later Pawan Hans.

During his flying career, he carried numerous dignitaries, including Atal Bihari Vajpayee and Farooq Abdullah. He later flew for Gujarat Copters and also flew Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whom he considers a friend. He has been active in ONA and is President of the Tricity Chapter. He makes it a point not to miss any event involving Old Nabhaites.

Dr Sabjeet Sohi (B-115)

An MD who retired as a Professor from Patiala Medical College, he subsequently moved to Toronto, Canada, after retirement.



Dr Sabjeet Sohi (1969), Dr JS Panaich (1966), Col Karan Thandi (1970), KJS Sujlana (1966)

The 1970 Batch



Col Manbir Hundal and Brig GS Julka. In background, Bubber on the left and Col Rupinder on the right.

Manbir Hundal (S-113)

A pocket dynamo in sports, he earned his place in school teams while still in the lower classes. He captained almost every team, particularly in cricket and hockey, and gave the Head Boy of his time a run for his money. He also represented NDA in several sports, where he held the rank of Squadron Cadet Captain of India squadron.

Brig GS Julka (J-101)

One of the toppers of his class, he joined NDA in Class X and became a member of its sailing team. He went on to compete at national level representing Corps of Engineers Sailing Club and EME Sailing Association. In 2014 he was appointed an international sailing judge by World Sailing. Since then, he has served as Chairman/member of international juries all over the world.

He was the bursar of school from 2011-2016, His tenure focused on infrastructure improvement, financial discipline, administrative reform, operational efficiency enhancing student experience. It resulted in qualitative improvement and significant financial saving.

Karan Thandi (S-96)

An avid golfer, he has served as Captain of the course at Chandigarh Golf Club and has been a member of its executive. Along with Brig Harbax Gill and Gen Tej Sapru, he has helped organise the highly successful PPS Golf event for more than a decade. The event has fostered close bonds among golfers from different batches of Old Nabhaites.



Standing L to R : Pardeep Batta, Dr Jashanjot, Brig Yashpal, Dr Coonar, Col Soharu, Harikirtan, AS Bubber, Cmdr. Ramesh Sharma, Gp. Capt. KS Rana, Iqbal Koonaar, Dr JS Panaich, Col JS Randhawa, Col Manbir Hundal

Sitting L to R: Gen Sapru, Wg Cmdr Bikramdev Singh, Mrs Ranjitpal Mann, Mrs Tandon, Mrs Dhanoa and Gurinder Dhanoa ,IPS

Apologies from Western Command

A few Old Nabhaite officers serving with Western Command though confirmed were unable to attend because of official commitments and family circumstances. They sent their apologies:

- **Lt Gen HS Sahi (S-589), Chief of Staff, Western Command** — unable to attend owing to an acute illness in the family.
- **Maj Gen Prince Duggal(R-493, 1986), Area Commander** — detained by official duty.
- **Brig Harmindar Singh Sandhu (R-624), Sub Area Commander** — held up on duty in Shimla and unable to return in time.

Their inability to attend did not diminish their association with the occasion.

The Young Blood: A Bridge Between Generations

A particularly thoughtful feature of the gathering was the invitation extended to a group of younger Old Nabhaites. Their presence added a fresh and distinctive dimension to the evening.

The senior members were keen to learn how the school had changed over the years. In turn, the younger Nabhaites wanted to hear about the school's formative years and the lives of those who had preceded them by several decades. The interaction was relaxed and natural, with the younger members feeling entirely comfortable in the company of their much older schoolmates.

There was a great deal of mutual respect and genuine curiosity. The exchange demonstrated that the spirit of PPS is not confined to any one generation; it is a shared legacy that continues to bring Old Nabhaites together.

The younger participants were:

- **Deepinder Brar (R-0257, 2010)**
- **Akashdeep Virk (S-00074, 2015)**
- **Harmandeep Khera (B-0523, 2010)**
- **Harjinder Khosa (R-0689, 2009)**



Photograph caption, left to right: Akashdeep Virk, Harjinder Khosa, Harmandeep Khera and Deepinder Brar.



Guru Iqbal Kooner (1966) with youngsters Deepinder (2010) and Harjinder (2009)

The Reunion Batch: 1966

For the members of the 1960–66 ISC / 67 H.Sc. batch, who had travelled from different parts of India and abroad, the enthusiastic response from fellow Old Nabhaites was particularly gratifying.

The organisers had spent months communicating with one another and planning the reunion, arranging accommodation and transport, coordinating the dinner in Chandigarh and liaising with the Headmaster. Dr Parampal Coonar (S-22) coordinated with the Headmaster regarding the proposed school visit. They were greatly helped by inputs and support from Dr Jashanjot (S-52). There had been much to plan, arrange and worry about to ensure the success of the occasion.

The sight of so many fellow Nabhaites coming together to share their celebration and wish them well made all those efforts worthwhile.



The 1966 batch and fellow Old Nabhaites, standing from left: Col Jagjit Soharu, Jaideep Sekhon, AS Bubber, Dr Jasarvinder Panaich, Dr Parampal Coonar, Pardeep Batta, Harikirtan Singh, Ramesh Sharma, Iqbal Kooner and KS Rana (1965).

Sitting: Bikram Dev Singh (1969), GS Dhanoa (1964), Col Rupinder Dhillon (1967), ***Mrs KPK Tandon,*** *Brig Yashpal Samyal (1966), Gen Tej Sapru (1964) and Ranjit Pal Mann (1965).*

The members of the 1966 batch who attended were:

1. Jaideep Sekhon (S-19) an MBA,
Retired Additional Chief Administrator PUDA. He provided inputs to Brig Yashpal and Col Soharu as coordinators of the Reunion.

2. Brig Yashpal Samyal (S-43)
The spearhead of the reunion's organisation and coordination. Received Commendation cards thrice, from Chief of Army Staff, Northern Army Commander and Western Army Commander. Survived two ambushes in Manipur.

3. Col JS Soharu (B-30)
Retired from the Corps of Engineers; subsequently worked as the General Manager at DLF Corporate Office, Gurugram.

4. Dr Parampal Coonar (S-22)
An MD who retired as Acting Director, Medical Education and Research, Punjab. Coordinated with the Headmaster.

5. Harikirtan Singh (S-24) B.Com, CPA (Canada)
Retired Audit Manager with the Government of Canada.

6. Iqbal Kooner (R-18)
An ace cricketer, he graduated from St Stephen's College and obtained a Master's degree from Punjabi University. He subsequently joined PPS as a teacher, becoming Head of Sports and the school's cricket coach.

7. Karamjit Sujlana (B-125, 1966)
Selected for training in the Merchant Navy aboard the training ship *Dufferin*, he went on to become a Merchant Navy captain. He is presently a company director involved in recruitment for merchant navy.

8. Col Dr Jasarvinder Singh Panaich
An MD in Pathology, he was selected for AFMC after leaving school. After retirement, he worked as Director of Lal Path Labs, Chandigarh.

9. Pardeep Batta (J-22)
A B.Com. graduate (when there were only three colleges in Punjab offering Commerce stream) and now a businessman in Malawi.

10. Ramesh Sharma (J-29)
A retired Commander of the Indian Navy, now living in Amritsar.

11. Arvinder Bubber (J-44)
A chartered accountant, qualified both in the UK and Canada, he runs his own accountancy firm and remains active in charitable and trade organisations. He also served on the board of Kwantlen University in British Columbia and as its Vice-Chancellor.



The Diamond Jubilee batch; Brig Yashpal, Col JS Soharu, Jaideep Sekhon, Pardeep Batta, Ramesh Sharma

A Memorable Evening Comes to a Close

What began as a reunion of a small, early batch of students had become something much larger: a celebration of shared memories, enduring friendships and the unmistakable spirit of PPS.

The evening was so engrossing that time seemed to fly. When Brig Yashpal announced dinner, many wished the gathering could have continued for longer. Soon, however, it was time to say goodbye. More than one person remarked while parting that there should be more such gatherings.



The gathering

After more than sixty years, the boys who had joined the school in 1960 were no longer boys, but the bonds they had formed at Nabha remained very much alive. For one memorable evening, the years seemed to fall away, and the old school spirit returned—stronger than time, distance and the passage of generations.

Harikirtan Singh (S-24) with Dr Jashanjot (S-52)