

Future military power will depend on speed of action, decision-making: Rajnath

Saurabh Trivedi

NEW DELHI

Military power in the future would depend less on the number of platforms a country possesses and more on the speed of sensing, decision-making and action, Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Saturday, while calling for greater self-reliance in defence technology, and stronger partnerships with trusted countries.

Mr. Singh addressed the participants in the second edition of the multinational air exercise 'Tarang Shakti 2026' at the Jodhpur Air Force Station, the Ministry of Defence said in a statement. Modern warfare was expanding beyond the traditional domains of land, sea and air to encompass space, cyber, the electromagnetic spectrum and the information domain, he told the gathering, adding that drones, artificial intelligence, electronic warfare and long-range precision weapons were increasingly shaping military operations.

Emphasising the impor-



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh in Jodhpur on Saturday. PTI

tance of *atmanirbharta* (self-reliance) in defence, he said indigenous capabilities were essential to sustain the country during prolonged conflicts.

Self-reliance did not mean isolation but the ability to design, develop, manufacture, maintain and upgrade critical defence technologies domestically, he said.

Indigenous systems

Highlighting India's aerospace and defence manufacturing ecosystem, Mr. Singh cited indigenously developed programmes, including the Tejas fighter aircraft, Dhruv, Rudra, Pra-

chand and Light Utility Helicopter, the Akash air defence system, and advanced radars, the Ministry's statement said. "Different nations. Different aircraft. Different experiences. But one sky. That is the message of Tarang Shakti," Mr. Singh said.

Hosted by the IAF from September 26 to October 12, the exercise brought together the Air Forces of Australia, Bangladesh, France, Germany, Sri Lanka, the UAE, and the U.S., along with 32 observer nations. Indigenous platforms, including the Tejas and Prachand, also participated.

Thousands held in capital clampdown

Heavy security, transport curbs fail to stop inflow of anti-CEC protesters to Delhi

Ex-CMs, journalists, lawyers among those detained; several picked up overnight

'Unprecedented' deployment leaves commercial hubs deserted in the city

Shrimansi Kaushik
Lavpreet Kaur
Vijaita Singh
NEW DELHI

Despite heavy security arrangements, transport restrictions, and an Internet shutdown, protesters on Saturday managed to reach locations near Jantar Mantar in central Delhi to demand the exit of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar over alleged electoral irregularities. With the designated protest site inaccessible, protesters led by All India Students Association (AISA) president Neha Bora attempted to assemble at Dilli Haat in south Delhi before being detained.

According to Delhi Police sources, nearly 2,500 protesters were detained across the capital during the day, indicating a high turnout despite the absence of prominent Cockerroach Janta Party (CJP) leaders on the ground. A few journalists were also detained. These were in addition to around 1,000 people picked up in preventive operations across Delhi overnight ahead of the protest. Several lawyers who were also detained were released following an intervention by Chief Justice of India Surya Kant. While YouTuber



On their toes: Security personnel rush to disperse protesters near Connaught Place on Saturday. SHASHI SHEKHAR KASHYAP

Dhruv Rathee was detained from his residence in the morning, CJP leaders Abhijeet Dipke, Ashutosh Ranka, and Saurav Das were taken immediately after their flight from Mumbai landed at Delhi airport. The CJP leaders had publicly announced their visit on social media, urging supporters to assemble at Jantar Mantar at 10 a.m. on Saturday for what they described as the "Final Call to Save Democracy".

Connaught Place, one of Delhi's busiest commercial hubs, was a deserted look amid an "unprecedented" security deployment in recent times, with multiple

layers of barricading and police personnel restricting public movement. All roads leading to Jantar Mantar were barricaded, with loudspeakers warning people of legal action if they defied instructions.

Detention centres

The youth-led protest, called by Left groups, the CJP, and civil society groups, kept the police and security forces on their toes as police forcibly removed protesters, put them in buses, and took them to large halls and stadiums on the outskirts of Delhi that had been converted into detention

centres. Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) leaders, including four former Chief Ministers – Mamata Banerjee, Pinarayi Vijayan, Manik Sarkar, and Arvind Kejriwal – were also among those detained.

Majority of detainees were released by late evening. However, the main CJP leaders were not released till last reports came in.

The CJP and the Students Federation of India announced that protest march to Jantar Mantar would be organised every day till the CEC resigned.

New Delhi district was virtually fortified on Saturday,

with over 20,000 security personnel, including Central Armed Police Force and the Delhi Police, holding vigil from early morning till late in the day, preventing protesters from entering the district, let alone reaching Jantar Mantar. With 45 Metro stations shut, over 200 trains arriving in Delhi cancelled, schools and colleges suspending classes, and marketplaces across central Delhi closed, protesters continued to find ways to reach the site, with some walking several kilometres.

CONTINUED ON
» **PAGE 7**

Stopping crowd from regrouping a challenging task

NEW DELHI

Though the Centre succeeded in preventing protesters from converging at Jantar Mantar on Saturday, its next challenge appeared to be stopping the largely "leaderless" crowd from regrouping. » **PAGE 7**

Youth bodies vow to sustain stir till CEC Kumar quits

NEW DELHI

Leaders of youth and student organisations on Saturday vowed to continue their protest until all their demands, including the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar were met. » **PAGE 8**

Concerned by 'mass detentions' in Delhi: UN body

NEW DELHI

The Office of the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner on Saturday said it was "concerned" by "mass detentions" and urged authorities to respect the right to peaceful protest. » **PAGE 9**

BKU joins stir, warns against targeting Dhruv Rathee

Anuj Kumar

NEW DELHI

Farmers under the banner of Bharatiya Kisan Union's (BKU) Tikait faction on Saturday protested at district headquarters across western Uttar Pradesh seeking the resignation of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar.

Delhi Police detained a delegation led by national general secretary Yudhvir Singh while it was on its way to Jantar Mantar. "Jantar Mantar is a spot where any Indian can peacefully express discontent. Delhi Police's behaviour was improper. We were taken around the city for more than three hours in a vehi-



Yudhvir Singh with BKU activists at Mundka police station. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

cle meant for heinous criminals and kept in detention at the Mundka police station. Some of our members have been held in Dwarka," he said.

The senior farmer leader, a special invitee on the

Rashtriya Lok Dal's Central Parliamentary Board, said he would raise the issue in the right forum. As an NDA constituent, farmers traditionally form the party's core vote bank. "This is not the time to look into narrow political interests. I admire [Union Minister] Chirag Paswan for taking a stand in support of young protesters," he told *The Hindu*.

Mr. Singh, also the general secretary of the All India Jat Mahasabha, said the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise didn't affect one group and that the farmers strongly support the young protesters. "(YouTuber) Dhruv Rathee is our child. If they target

him, we will not hold back. If the police have weapons, we are known to use our agricultural tools as weapons in times of adversity," he said. Describing the protests as a watershed moment in India's history, the farmer leader said the country had won democracy after more than 700 years of struggle. "We will not let it go easily."

He said senior BKU leader and national spokesperson Rakesh Tikait, who was in Pune on Saturday, would soon join the protest.

Calling the protest a success, Mr. Singh said the government's rigid approach, including deploying paramilitary

forces, cancelling trains, and shutting down Delhi Metro, has amplified the protest's message. "Protests are about sending a message. The unprecedented measures like calling in paramilitary forces and six-layer barricading have sent a message across the country that the government is under fear and hiding something," he said.

The call, he added, was not against the BJP government. "It is about seeking answers from the commission after news reports suggested that the CEC is taking illegal decisions without consultation, but the BJP has taken upon itself to defend Gyanesh Kumar."

Circumstances changed, US trade pact to be finalised accordingly, says Goyal



India is seeking lower tariffs for its goods than its competitors in the American markets. REUTERS

ENS Economic Bureau
New Delhi, October 10

THE US and India announced in February that they had reached a framework for an interim trade agreement, but circumstances have changed, and the pact will be finalised accordingly, Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said on Saturday.

“A trade pact was announced between India and the US in February. The circumstances have changed, and a final decision will be made keeping that in mind,” he said.

The minister, however, did not elaborate about those circumstances, but the changing tariff landscape in the US has led to further negotiations about the first phase of the bilateral trade agreement (BTA) between India and the US.

Speaking at the 121st Annual Session of PHD Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Goyal said India will launch negotiations for a preferential

trade agreement (PTA) with Mexico next week. Negotiations with several trading partners are progressing as India seeks to expand preferential access for its exporters and diversify markets amid uncertainties in global trade, he added.

Mexico is an important market for Indian exporters.

The Mexican negotiations are part of India's broader push to widen its network of trade agreements, with discussions also underway with Israel, Chile, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) and countries in Central Asia and Eurasia.

Goyal said the government is working towards expanding the country's preferential market access through trade agreements, with negotiations increasingly involving industry and farmers to ensure that the resulting arrangements serve domestic economic interests. FE

'THE MOVE WILL ALSO BRING DOWN PRESSURE ON THE RUPEE'

RBI opens dollar lifeline for oil PSUs as rupee nears 97

George Mathew

Mumbai, October 10

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Saturday said it will open a special dollar window for three public sector oil marketing companies to cushion pressure mounting on India's oil sector as crude prices surged above \$100 a barrel.

The move will allow Indian Oil Corporation, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation and Bharat Petroleum Corporation to meet their entire daily dollar requirements through a facility operated by the central bank.

Effective October 12, 2026, the arrangement will remain in place until further notice. Under the mechanism, the RBI will sell dollars to the three companies through designated banks, ensuring that their daily foreign currency requirements are met. The RBI move is likely to reduce the pressure on the rupee which is almost near the 97 level against the dollar. On Friday, the rupee closed at 96.73 against the dollar.

Forex reserves also dipped by \$12.95 billion to \$734.60 billion during the week ended October 2.

The decision is significant not merely because of the scale of support being extended to the oil marketing companies, but also because it places the RBI directly at the centre of meeting their dollar needs.

The RBI said its decision was based on an assessment of current market conditions. However, the scope of the intervention is substantial. The facility is designed to cover the entire daily dollar requirements of all three public sector oil marketing companies, rather than provide limited or partial assistance.

The RBI's announcement also raises a larger question about the pressures confronting the oil sector when crude prices climb sharply. The need for a dedicated window covering the companies' entire daily dollar requirements demon-



Giving a leg up

THE MOVE will allow Indian Oil Corporation, Hindustan Petroleum Corporation and Bharat Petroleum Corporation to meet their entire daily dollar needs through a RBI-operated facility

UNDER THE mechanism, the RBI will sell dollars to the three companies through designated banks, ensuring that their daily foreign currency requirements are met

OIL IMPORTS have to be paid for, and a weaker rupee increases their cost in domestic currency. When companies cannot fully pass on higher costs to consumers, their margins and finances come under pressure

strates the scale of the foreign currency support being made available.

The facility will remain operational until further notice, with no fixed end date announced. This gives the arrangement an open-ended character, although the RBI has not specified how long the window is expected to remain necessary.

High crude feeds inflation

India depends on imports to meet more than 88% of its crude oil requirements. This dependence leaves the economy exposed whenever international crude prices rise or the rupee weakens against the dollar. In September, *The Indian Express* reported that the three public sector OMCs were facing substantial losses on fuel sales as global petroleum prices rose and domestic retail prices did not fully reflect the increase. The companies were estimated to be losing more than Rs 500 crore daily at the time.

Oil imports have to be paid for, and a weaker rupee increases their cost in domestic currency.

When companies cannot fully pass on higher costs to consumers, their margins and finances come under pressure. The consequences are not confined to the oil companies. Higher energy costs can feed into transportation, manufacturing and other sectors, eventually affecting household budgets and inflation. Higher oil prices also lead to imported inflation at a time when retail inflation is forecast to touch 5.2% in 2026-27 and the RBI is on a rate hiking cycle. It hiked repo rates by 25 bps to 5.50% on October 7.

The RBI's intervention addresses one part of this chain: the oil companies' need to buy dollars. It does not remove India's dependence on imported energy or guarantee that the rupee will strengthen.

Analysts said the RBI move will also bring down pressure on the rupee. The special window may ease the daily scramble for dollars faced by the three oil companies. Whether it provides lasting relief will depend on broader market conditions, international oil prices and the trajectory of the rupee.

GIFTS TO PUTIN WILL NOT BRING PEACE OR ANY BENEFIT TO THE CIVILIZED WORLD, SAYS ZELENSKY

Trump says Russia to supply diesel to US and global markets

Moscow to supply 300,000 tonnes of diesel now, more later, says President

Reuters

Washington, October 10

PRESIDENT DONALD Trump said on Friday that Russia had agreed to supply diesel to global markets in an effort to lower fuel prices, and his administration temporarily lifted US sanctions on Russian fuel that were designed to deprive Moscow of revenues for its war on Ukraine.

Prices for diesel, used for agriculture, heating homes and trucking, are near a record and risk for Trump's fellow Republicans ahead of the November 3 congressional elections that will determine whether they maintain thin control of Congress. Diesel prices fell after the announcement, but analysts said the deal may not be enough to keep them down.

Trump said on social media he had a "highly successful" discussion with President Vladimir Putin in which they



President Donald Trump with President Vladimir Putin at a press meet in Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson in Anchorage, Alaska. FILE

agreed that Russia will immediately supply more than 300,000 metric tons of diesel to US and global markets, equal to about 2.25 million barrels of fuel. The US exports about 1.5 million barrels of diesel per day.

After the call, an envoy for Putin, Kirill Dmitriev, praised cooperation between Russia and the US in a post on X. Dmitriev asked US officials during his visit to Washington last month for licenses to export diesel to the US

market to be granted to all Russian major oil firms, sources familiar with the situation said.

In October 2025, the US imposed sanctions on Russian oil companies over Moscow's war that began in 2022. The diesel exports could provide Moscow with billions of dollars in revenues that could help Putin continue the war with Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy criticised the deal, announced while a Ukrain-

ian delegation was in the US to discuss how to seek a resolution of the war, as a "weak decision on the part of strong partners."

"Gifts to Putin will not bring peace or any benefit to the civilized world. Russia will 'repay' the diesel with further terror and perfidy," he said on X.

The deal was also criticized by US lawmakers including Trump's fellow Republican, Representative Don Bacon, who said it is time to apply more sanctions that Congress passed recently, not lift the measures. "Now is the time to use those sanctions to squeeze Putin's war machine, not reward a dictator by putting more money in his hands while he continues targeting and killing Ukrainian civilians," Bacon said on X.

The US Treasury Department issued a license allowing importation of Russian diesel until April 7.

Trump said Russia would supply another 500,000 tons in November and a further 1 million tons "immediately thereafter." Even more would follow, Trump said, "based on the condition of their diesel refineries," which have been damaged by Ukrainian attacks.

3 children among 20 killed in Russian strikes on Ukraine

Kyiv: Russian strikes killed at least 20 people in Ukraine's Zaporizhzhia region, Ukrainian officials said Saturday, a day after US President Donald Trump announced a deal to buy Russian diesel that Kyiv warned would help bankroll Moscow's war in Ukraine.

Three children were among those killed when Russian aerial bombs hit residential buildings in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine's State Emergency Service said Saturday. At least 18 people were wounded.

Missiles also struck Kyiv in a daytime attack Saturday. Mayor Vitalii Klitschko said four people were wounded.

"Today, Russia expressed its thanks for the lifting of sanctions on diesel exports by dropping five glide bombs on residential buildings in Zaporizhzhia," Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy wrote Saturday on X.

Pakistan has established 'robust' nuclear security regime, says IAEA after review

Press Trust of India

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan has established a "robust nuclear security regime" for protecting nuclear material and facilities, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has said after completing its first physical protection advisory mission to the country.

A seven-member IAEA team concluded a 12-day International Physical Protection Advisory Service (IPPAS) mission on Friday, conducted from September 28 to October 9 at the

request of the Pakistani government.

Hosted by the Pakistan Nuclear Regulatory Authority (PNRA), the mission reviewed the country's legislative and regulatory framework for nuclear security and assessed physical protection measures at a nuclear facility.

"The IPPAS team noted that Pakistan has established a robust nuclear security regime for physical protection of nuclear material and nuclear facilities, which was observed to be appropriately implemented at the facility visited,"



The regime is continually improved through periodic reviews, says IAEA. REUTERS

the IAEA said. It added that the regime is continually improved through periodic reviews, while Pakistan's capacity-building infrastructure contributes to nuclear security expertise at

the national, regional and international levels.

The team met officials from the PNRA, Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission and other stakeholders and visited the KANUPP Decommissioning Project at the Karachi Nuclear Power Generating Station.

Pakistan's first nuclear power plant, the Canadian Deuterium Uranium reactor, began operations in 1971 and was permanently shut down in 2021. Experts observed decommissioning activities and spent-fuel storage at the site.

Missile strikes passenger terminal at Riyadh airport

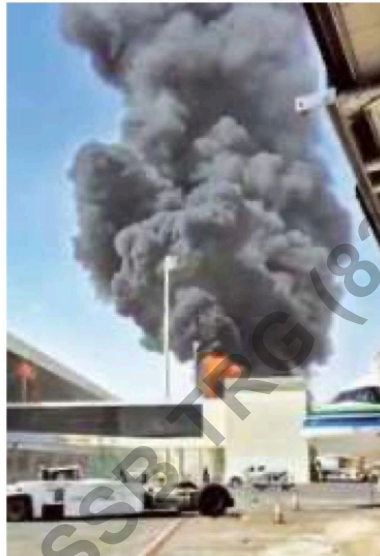
Associated Press

CAIRO

The airport in Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, was attacked again on Saturday and evacuated, two regional officials said, just days after three Saudi citizens, including a pilot, were killed as the kingdom faces an extraordinary series of assaults in the new front in the Iran war.

U.S. President Donald Trump told presspersons he was evaluating whether the U.S. should join Saudi strikes against the Houthi (Ansar Allah) rebels in neighbouring Yemen who have claimed this week's attacks on King Khalid International Airport as well as other Saudi airports, military facilities and oil infrastructure.

"We may. We're going to look at it," Mr. Trump said.



Thick black smoke and flames rising from a fire at King Khalid International Airport in Riyadh.

"We just found out about the recent attack. So we'll make a decision. We move very quickly."

In the latest attack, a missile struck a complex housing terminals 3 and 4 for domestic flights at the Riyadh airport and many people were wounded, an

official said. Saudi civil aviation authorities said operations at the airport had been suspended and the number of wounded and damage were being assessed. An official notice to aviators said the suspension was through midnight. The airport had a heavy police presence, with all entrances blocked, and lights around the complex were dimmed.

Flights diverted elsewhere, the Flightradar24 tracker said. Countries including the United States, Britain, Germany, Australia and Canada warned citizens to avoid the airport.

Meanwhile, Saudi authorities warned the public that "filming, publishing or sharing information related to countering missiles and drones and their impact sites exposes you to legal liability".

Trump strikes deal with Putin to get diesel in sharp reversal of U.S. policy

The deal reverses years of U.S. pressure on Moscow over its war in Ukraine and contradicts a new U.S. sanctions law against Russian energy revenues; while Zelenskyy calls the move a 'weak decision', Trump says Ukraine should 'get a new President'

Associated Press
WASHINGTON

U.S. President Donald Trump said he has struck a deal to obtain diesel from Russia, a reversal of years of U.S. pressure on Moscow over its war with Ukraine and an attempt to address high fuel prices ahead of the U.S. midterm elections.

Mr. Trump said on social media on Friday that he struck the deal with Russian President Vladimir Putin in a phone call in which he was expected to discuss a suspected case of plague in Russia. Instead, Mr. Trump announced that Russia will immediately supply more than 300,000



Changing stance: Donald Trump leaves the stage after speaking during an election rally in Syracuse, New York on Friday. AFP

tonnes of diesel, followed by an additional 500,000 tonnes in November and one million tonnes "immediately thereafter". Russia will deliver an additional 3 million tonnes "within a

short period of time" after that, he wrote.

Mr. Trump's shocking announcement was in stark contrast to a sweeping Russia sanctions law he signed last month that

aimed at clamping down on the oil and gas revenues that fuel Russia's war against Ukraine.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy called it "a weak decision, unfortunately, a weak decision by strong partners," according to a statement released by the Ukrainian Embassy in Washington.

Asked about the criticism on Saturday, Mr. Trump told presspersons that Mr. Zelenskyy had disobeyed his orders not to strike Russian refineries. Mr. Trump said the strikes risk worsening global fuel shortages caused by the U.S.-Israeli war on Iran.

"He better damn well stop," Mr. Trump said of

the strikes, before adding that Ukraine should "get a new President".

"I suggest they get a new leader who can make a deal, because he could have made many deals that, for some reason, he never does".

Mr. Trump's move casts doubt on the likelihood of the White House imposing new sanctions on Russia, given that the law that passed overwhelmingly by Congress directs the administration to target countries that purchase Russian oil and gas.

EU foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas said that lifting sanctions on Russian diesel helped fuel Kremlin's war on Ukraine.

Twin 7.7 and 6.6 earthquakes strike Panama, prompt evacuations as aftershocks continue

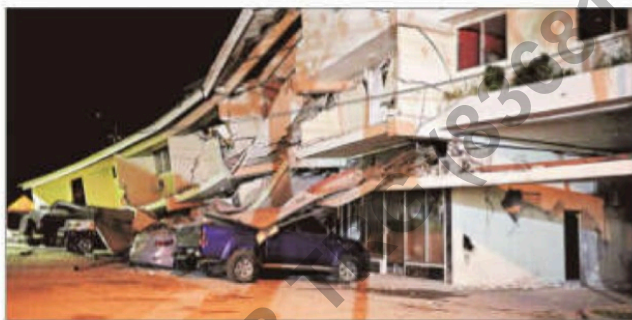
Associated Press

Panama City, October 10

TWO POWERFUL 7.7 and 6.6 magnitude earthquakes and a series of aftershocks roiled southern Panama Friday afternoon, collapsing buildings near the epicenter and prompting evacuations across the country.

The earlier quake, felt as far away as neighboring Colombia, was centered about 10 kilometers (6 miles) southwest of the remote community of Pitaloza Arriba, in the central province of Herrera, the USGS said. It struck at a depth of 10 kilometers. The USGS initially reported the first quake as magnitude 8, then revised it to 7.6 and later to 7.7.

Visibly shaken residents of Panama City, the capital, gathered outside as they waited for



Vehicles lie crushed beneath a collapsed hotel after an earthquake struck Penonome, Panama, on Friday. AP

news of the quake's impact on Friday. "We felt it very strongly. It knocked things over in the kitchen, but we're okay, though we're very scared," Rosendo Domínguez, 60, who is from Herrera province, where the earthquake struck, told The Associated Press by phone.

"Everyone is outside, scared."

Multiple aftershocks continued to rattle Panama, including several measuring magnitude 5.8, 5.5 and 5.2. Seismologists at the University of Panama recorded more than 45 aftershocks, though many were too weak to be felt.

• POWERFUL QUAKES JOLT PANAMA



Despite the strength of the successive quakes, Panamanian President José Raúl Mulino said authorities had not documented anyone killed as of Friday evening, though he cautioned that could change in the coming hours or days.

"Nobody was ready, and no one is ever ready for this type of disaster," Mulino said, after calling for calm earlier in the day.