



ACM Ashutosh Dixit takes charge as 29th IAF chief

Air Chief Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, a seasoned fighter pilot with over 3,500 hours of flying experience on more than 20 types of aircraft, on Saturday assumed charge as the 29th Chief of the Air Staff, succeeding Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh, who retired after a distinguished career spanning 43 years. The Indian Air Force (IAF) accorded a ceremonial guard of honour to Air Chief Marshal Singh at the Race Course Air Force Station here before he handed over the baton to his successor. Air Chief Marshal Dixit, who was serving as the Vice Chief of the Air Staff, played a key role in strategic planning during Operation Sindoor.



Toshimitsu Motegi, S. Jaishankar, Marco Rubio and Penny Wong during the meeting of Foreign Ministers in Atlanta. ANI

Quad plans \$85 mn in technical aid for access to trusted AI

Press Trust of India

WASHINGTON

Foreign Ministers of Quad grouping on Saturday expressed their intent to provide \$85 million in technical assistance to expand access to trusted Artificial Intelligence across the Indo-Pacific even as the U.S. committed to provide \$10 million for recycling critical minerals in India and ASEAN countries.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio hosted a meeting with External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar,

Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi and Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong on the sidelines of G20 Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Atlanta.

Participating in the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting, Mr. Jaishankar said he spoke about countering non-market practices and increased economic stresses in the Indo-Pacific. Mr. Jaishankar said he highlighted the importance of maintaining stability, driving prosperity and ensuring freedom of choice.

ISRO flew NVS-03 satellite with pyro valves open: chief

Press Trust of India

SRIHARIKOTA

ISRO chief V. Narayanan on Saturday said that in order to ensure mission reliability and bypass previous technical hurdles, the NVS-03 satellite was operated with “three pyro valves open”.

Addressing the media at a post-launch press conference, Mr. Narayanan revealed that this bold technical decision was validated after rigorous vibration and shock testing by a national-level committee chaired by former ISRO chief Kiran Kumar.

Pyro valves are crucial in spacecraft propulsion, and it may be recalled that the NVS-02 (launched in 2025), the second spacecraft in the NVS series, was a failure.

A high-level panel, after thorough analysis, concluded that “the drive signal did not reach the pyro valve of the oxidiser line of the engine meant for orbit raising.”

In February 2026, ISRO announced that the most likely cause was the disengagement of at least one contact (in each of the main and redundant paths) of the connector.

Against this back-

ground, Mr. Narayanan said that with four satellites, including NVS-01 now active in India’s navigation satellite system, ISRO plans to launch NVS-04 in five months, and NVS-05 in 10 months to further bolster the constellation.

‘Exceptional accuracy’

Mr. Narayanan highlighted the exceptional accuracy of the flight. “Against [the planned] perigee [the point in an orbit closest to Earth] of 170.36 km, we have got 170.31 kilometres,” he said.

“Against [the planned] apogee [the point in an orbit farthest from Earth] of 37,247 kilometres, we achieved 38,080 kilometres,” he noted. “This is one of the best accuracy of any of the launch vehicles in the world we can think of,” he added.

The successful deployment has restored India’s NavIC (Navigation with Indian Constellation) to its minimum operating configuration of four satellites, bolstering both strategic and civilian location services across the subcontinent.

The ISRO successfully placed NVS-03 into a highly precise orbit using the GSLV-F18 launch vehicle on Saturday.

India's first fusion power company sets road map for a nuclear reactor

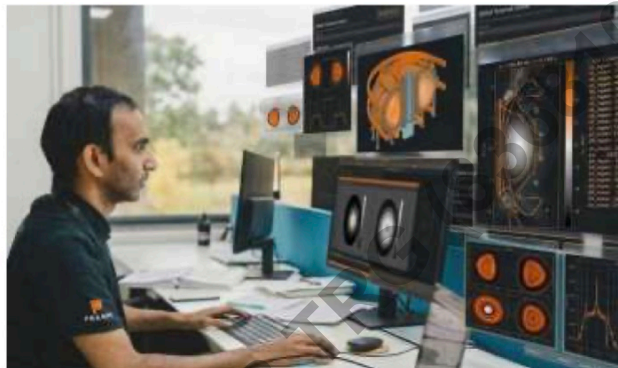
Jacob Koshy

NEW DELHI

If all goes to plan, India may see designs for the first privately-built tokamak, a nuclear reactor that uses fusion to produce energy, firmed up in 2027.

Bengaluru-based startup Pranos Fusion has built PRAGYA, a small doughnut-shaped tokamak, to test plasma control and superconducting magnets. This is a gateway to building PRANIK, a larger tokamak that will have plasma heated up to millions of degrees – more than the interior of the Sun – necessary to fuse hydrogen atoms and create energy.

“By 2027, we expect to finalise the blueprint for PRANIK and be on our way to building a practical reactor that can produce energy. To be able to actually produce electricity from fusion is a further step



Fusion frontier: The Bengaluru-based startup has built a compact tokamak as a test bed for plasma control. SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

away,” Shaurya Kaushal, co-founder and CEO of Pranos Fusion, said.

Nuclear plants everywhere employ fission – a chain reaction involving uranium nuclei to produce heat that is used to generate electricity. Fusion, on the other hand, releases energy when light atomic nuclei merge, and usually involves joining two forms of hydrogen – deuterium and tritium – into helium

and a fast neutron. However, this requires the fuel to be heated to around 100 million degrees Celsius, far hotter than any solid wall could withstand. In tokamaks, powerful magnets hold this superheated plasma away from the walls, keeping it hot enough for fusion to continue.

“Electricity from a fusion reactor is still far away and would be expensive now, however the need for

any source of energy is only going to grow,” co-founder Roshan George said.

“Fusion’s advantage is that while [it’s] nuclear power, it doesn’t need radioactive material like uranium. India already produces plenty of deuterium. Fusion reactions are also not chain reactions, and therefore the risk of a runaway reaction [like in a fission reactor] is almost absent,” Mr. George added.

The cost of a private tokamak depends on scale, Mr. Kaushal said. A compact research machine like PRAGYA is “a comparatively modest investment”.

Pranos Fusion says compact machines, HTS (high-temperature superconducting) magnets, and India’s manufacturing base can bring costs down substantially. It is backed by Ankur Capital, pi Ventures and Industrial47, and has raised \$7.2 million.

INDIA bloc adopts motion to 'impeach' CEC over 6 charges

Opposition holds symbolic Parliament session; it accuses Gyanesh Kumar of conspiring with BJP to steal elections, disenfranchising 13.2 crore voters

Sandeep Phukan

NEW DELHI

The Indian National Developmental, Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) on Saturday carried out a symbolic “public impeachment” of Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Gyanesh Kumar, unanimously adopting a “motion” by a show of hands.

The Opposition bloc levelled six charges against Mr. Kumar, including conspiring with the ruling BJP to steal elections, disenfranchising 13.2 crore voters through the special intensive revision (SIR) exercise, and acting at the behest of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah.

Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha Rahul Gand-



Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge speaks during the symbolic ‘impeachment’ of CEC Gyanesh Kumar in New Delhi on Saturday. PTI

hi described Saturday’s exercise as a “political weapon” aimed at all those who had “colluded” to destroy the votes of Indian people. He asserted that Mr. Kumar should not only be removed from office but also tried in a court of law for treason. The Opposition was compelled to hold a public impeachment because “every other institu-

tion and institutional direction” was closed to it, Mr. Gandhi said, warning that those involved in electoral irregularities “would not escape accountability and would have to face representatives of the people”.

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‘INSTITUTIONS RIDICULED’

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Opposition bloc adopts motion to 'impeach' CEC

The "motion" was moved by Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, whose official residence served as the venue for the public impeachment.

The proceedings, which went on for three-and-a-half hours, were modelled on those of Parliament, replicating the setting of the Lok Sabha, with former Speaker Meira Kumar presiding over the session.

Mr. Gandhi said the unprecedented gathering in the garden of Mr. Kharge's residence may seem "absurd" and reflected the closure of institutional avenues available to the Opposition.

"This may look like a meeting of MPs and ordinary citizens, but it is, in fact, a political weapon aimed directly at every single person who colluded to destroy the votes of the Indian people," Mr. Gandhi said.

In a pointed warning to officials working under the CEC, Mr. Gandhi said they could not expect legal protection to shield them indefinitely. "Mr. Modi and Mr. Shah might be on top. We will deal with them, but you are their instruments, and so you are our first target," he said. He also cautioned officials not to underestimate the public response in a time of political change.

Mr. Gandhi alleged that 13.3 crore votes had been deleted from electoral rolls, accounting for nearly 15% of India's electorate, while the difference between the Opposition and the winning side in the 2024 Lok Sabha election was only three percentage points.

‘CEC acting at behest of PM, HM’

Earlier, moving the motion, Mr. Kharge accused the CEC of overseeing a conspiracy to manipulate elections, deleting voters’ names, changing Form 6 without parliamentary oversight, centralising electoral rolls through ERONET/ECINET, excluding the other two Election Commissioners from decision-making, and acting at the behest of the Prime Minister and the Home Minister.

“The right to vote is under threat because CEC Gyanesh Kumar is running the Election Commission on the directions of Modi and Shah,” Mr. Kharge alleged. He said 193 Opposition MPs had submitted notices in both Houses of Parliament seeking Mr. Kumar’s removal seven months ago, but their proposals had been rejected. The present exercise, he said, was intended to restore public confidence in the Election Commission.

“We are fighting to keep genuine voters on electoral rolls. It is the BJP which is protecting *ghus-paithiyas*,” the Congress chief said.

Mamata Trinamool Congress leader Sagarika Ghose alleged that the 2026 West Bengal Assembly election was “stolen” by deleting eligible voters from the electoral rolls, while her colleague, Mahua Moitra claimed that 71% of those deleted from the Bengal electoral rolls were Muslims and 51% were women.

Communist Party of India (Marxist) MP John Brittas said the SIR exercise was hollowing out universal adult franchise by forcing even elected representatives to establish their eligibility to vote. Noting that he had personally attended two hearings to establish that he was an eligible voter, he asked: “If this is the situation of an MP, a public representative, what would be the condition of the common man?”

Other senior leaders, including former Jammu and Kashmir Chief Minister Mehbooba Mufti, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Arvind Sawant, CPI(ML) MP Sudama Prasad, and the Samajwadi Party’s Harendra Malik, also spoke on the motion.

Meiteis, Nagas hold rally in Imphal for SoO truce pact abrogation

Jimmy Leivon
Imphal, October 31

IN WHAT is arguably one of the largest public gatherings in Manipur since the start of the ethnic conflict in 2023, a massive rally was held by Meitei and Naga groups in Imphal on Saturday. The demonstration follows a recent flare-up in tensions involving both groups and the Kuki-Zo community.

Organised by the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), the rally was held to demand lasting peace, justice for victims of the prolonged crisis, safe resettlement of internally displaced persons, and abrogation of the Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement with Kuki militant groups.

Naga apex body, United Naga Council (UNC), endorsed Saturday's rally. It began at Tidim Ground in Kwakeithel and culminated in a meeting at Thau Ground in Thangmeiband, Imphal West district.

Thousands of people from different walks of life took part, raising slogans such as 'Remove SoO', 'End proxy war', 'Bring peace in Manipur', and 'Manipur needs justice'. In response to COCOMI's protest call, business establishments and educational institutions remained closed, while public transport services were suspended.

Authorities barricaded roads leading to the Chief Minister's bungalow and Raj Bhavan as a precautionary measure. Security personnel also conducted frisking and implemented traffic diversions at several locations, including Keishampat Junction, Konung Mamang, Palace Gate and Kangla Western Gate.

Describing the massive turnout as historic, COCOMI Convenor Khuraijam Athouba said the rally demonstrated unity among

Manipur's indigenous communities in their demand for justice.

"This is a testimony that the indigenous population of Manipur is united and ready to stand against the injustices meted out to them by the Central Government through the State Government," he said.

He alleged that the Centre had failed to address the concerns over the lives and properties of indigenous people, terming the prevailing situation a "proxy war". He said communities across Manipur, including Nagas, Meiteis and other ethnic groups, remained concerned about their security and future.

"The proxy war campaign carried out by the Government of India using Chin-Kuki-Narco Terrorists must be stopped immediately," he said.

Athouba warned continued indifference by the Centre towards the plight of indigenous communities could compel them to determine their own course of action against what he termed "narco-terrorism".

Extending support to COCOMI's demands, the United Naga Council (UNC), along with its federating units, sub-constituencies and Naga civil society organisations, also organised protest rallies in several hill districts, particularly in Naga-dominated areas such as Senapati and Chandel.

UNC president N G Lorho said Nagas across the hill districts had united to defend their ancestral land. "We are the owners and guardians of our land from time immemorial. We will not surrender our ancestral right," he said. A Naga representative, Achung Gangmei, alleged that indigenous communities were being subjected to a "proxy war" and accused Manipur government of fusing Kuki militants against other communities.



During the joint rally in Imphal on Saturday. ANI

Three Kuki-Zo men killed in Noney district in exchange of fire

Jimmy Leivon
Imphal, October 31

THREE KUKI-ZO men died following an exchange of fire with unidentified armed miscreants at Kekru Naga village in the Nungba sub-division of Manipur's Noney district on Saturday.

Following the incident, police heightened security but did not specify the cause of the shootout or the identities of those involved.

Unconfirmed reports indicate the firing began around 10 am and lasted for several hours, following 48 hours of intermittent attacks on Kekru Naga village and adjoining areas by armed miscreants.

The identities of the dead are yet to be confirmed.

The Kuki Inpi Manipur (KIM), the apex body representing Kuki tribes, condemned the incident, stating the victims were village volunteers and accusing the NSCN-IM and ZUF(K) of the killings.

Accusing authorities of failing to provide adequate security to vulnerable Kuki-Zo communities, KIM stated that the government must ensure civilian safety in the affected areas.

Expressing solidarity with the bereaved families, the organisation demanded justice, accountability, and immediate intervention to prevent further violence.

The police have not publicly identified the perpetrators in the statement confirming the incident.

New phase of India's poverty challenge

Siddharth Upasani

New Delhi, October 31

THE WORLD Bank's latest 'Poverty & Equity Brief' note shows that poverty in India fell significantly in 2023 to 2.6% as per a \$3-per-day poverty line and to 16.1% if the Lower Middle-Income Country threshold of \$4.2-per-day is used. These are significant declines and deserve appreciation.

The World Bank also estimates the poverty rate for 2026 at 14.2% (as per the threshold of \$4.2-per-day) which may fall to 12.1% by 2028. These figures will be updated as labour market and macroeconomic numbers are revised or new data become available. And the projected decline in the poverty rate hinges on a key development: India's poorest states creating productive jobs.

The World Bank also noted that youth unemployment has risen over the past year to 15.9% and real earnings have not moved much.

The 'feeling' of growth

To be sure, India has been posting rather impressive growth rates, with the 7.8% expansion of the GDP in the April-June quarter besting nearly all forecasts. And yet, questions have been raised about this rapid growth not being 'felt' on the ground.

This isn't unique to India, with the International Labour Organization (ILO) wondering a couple of weeks ago why life is "becoming harder to afford de-



Globally, the share of income going to labour fell from around 54% in 2004 to 52.6% in 2025. REUTERS

spite economic growth?" According to ILO Chief Economist Sangheon Lee, the relationship between higher productivity and wages has been weakening: globally, the share of income going to labour declined from around 54% in 2004 to 52.6% in 2025.

Government officials privately acknowledge the tough road that lies ahead, warning that India's demographic dividend cannot be taken for granted.

"Our biggest problem is that we think demographic dividend is a tailwind for India. With social media, smartphones, and now AI affecting cognitive skills, ability to concentrate and read 10 pages at a time, and the impact on mental, physical, and social health, the question is whether the demographic dividend can be taken for granted. Probably not," a government official said.

Problem states

The World Bank estimates that 57% of India's poor now live in a "contiguous belt stretching from Uttar Pradesh to West Bengal". It did not provide state-wise poverty rates.

Luckily, a Reserve Bank of India (RBI) staff paper last year updated India's last official poverty line, set by a committee led by former RBI governor C Rangarajan. The Rangarajan poverty line caused a stir in 2014 when it estimated the national

poverty line at Rs 1,407 in terms of monthly per capita expenditure for urban areas and Rs 972 for rural areas. This led to India's poverty rate being pegged at 29.5%. The updated, but unofficial, Rangarajan poverty lines for 20 major states using the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey for 2022-23 produced noteworthy results.

In rural areas, the states with by far the highest poverty rates

were Chhattisgarh (25.1%) and Jharkhand (16.6%). Rural Madhya Pradesh was fourth (9.6%), West Bengal seventh (7.5%), Bihar ninth (5.9%), and Uttar Pradesh 11th (5.7%).

The results were slightly more telling for urban areas. Chhattisgarh again had the highest poverty rate (13.3%), followed by Jharkhand (12.6%), West Bengal (12.4%), and Madhya Pradesh (11.6%). Uttar Pradesh was sixth (9.9%) and Bihar seventh (9.1%). It was not all bad news for these states, because they had recorded huge declines in poverty levels between 2011-12 and 2022-23. For instance, the fall in poverty in urban Bihar was the highest of any state, from 50.8% in 2011-12 to 9.1% in 2022-23.

Wages and youth

While the World Bank noted that employment increased by 13.4 crore between 2017 and 2023, the challenges for the Uttar Pradesh-to-West Bengal states are apparent too. Consider the following:

- Wages of factory workers in Jharkhand declined 5.2% in 2024-25 against a 5.3% all-India rise. It was the only state to see a fall in wages.

- In 2025, 81% of districts in Bihar — the highest in the country — had more than a quarter of all youngsters aged 15-29 were neither employed nor in education or training. West Bengal was second at 75%, with Uttar Pradesh not far behind at 69%.

FULL REPORT ON

WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

NEPAL WAS HIT BY FLASH FLOOD ON AUGUST 26 THIS YEAR

Despite flood, Nepal stepped up power exports to India

Pratyush Deep

New Delhi, October 31

DESPITE FLASH flood damaging hydropower projects and disrupting electricity evacuation in Nepal in August, the country exported electricity worth over Rs 725 crore to India in the two months that followed, data provided by the Nepal Electricity Authority (NEA) shows.

Between August 27, a day after the floods hit Nepal, and October 27, the country exported around 1,262 million units (MU) of electricity to India, the NEA data showed.

This was equivalent to nearly a third of the electricity Nepal exported to India during the financial year 2025-26.

The continued exports came despite apprehensions among Indian government officials about possible disruptions to electricity supplies from Nepal, given the damage to several hydropower plants, including the 14-MW Devighat hydropower plant, which supplies electricity to India.

In September, the Union Ministry of Power had also approved the Nepal government's request for early imports of electricity from India, saying that the "floods have caused significant damage to hydropower infrastructure in Nepal, reducing its domestic power generation capacity and creating an additional requirement for electricity." How, then, was Nepal able to sustain electricity exports to India?

Seasonal surplus and electricity trade

Nepal exports electricity primarily to two countries, India and Bangladesh. And India accounts for the bulk of its exports. Electricity trade between Nepal and India is seasonal, with Nepal exporting surplus power to India during the monsoon and importing electricity during the dry winter months when domestic hydropower generation declines.

● Against the odds

● Nepal Electricity Authority attributed this sustained electricity supply to surplus generation

● Nepal had applied to Indian authorities for approval to export electricity from additional power projects within a week of the floods on August 26

● Indian government officials, on the other hand, believe the sustained electricity supplies

from Nepal may, in part, be explained by a decline in domestic demand following the floods.

● The damage to homes, infrastructure and transmission networks may have reduced electricity consumption in the affected areas, leaving more power available for export.



As per the annual report of NEA, Nepal had a total available energy of 18,624 MU in 2025-26. Out of total available energy, 12,394 MU has been utilised in Nepal, 3,817 MU and 148 MU were exported to India and Bangladesh, respectively.

Similarly, Nepal had 15,641 MU of available energy in 2024-25, of which 11,343 MU was consumed domestically and 2,380 MU was exported to India.

The seasonal surplus has contributed to a steady rise in Nepal's earnings from electricity exports. Its earnings from electricity exports increased from Nepalese Rupee (NPR) 17.47 billion in 2024-25 to NPR 29.3 billion in 2025-26.

Surplus or low load?

Achyut Babu Ghimire, spokesperson for the NEA, attributed this sustained electricity supply to this surplus generation. He said Nepal had applied to Indian authorities for approval to export electricity from additional power projects within a week of the floods on August 26.

"We have a surplus of electricity during the monsoon,

which is why we were able to continue supplying power to India," Ghimire told *The Indian Express*.

Indian government officials, on the other hand, believe the sustained electricity supplies from Nepal may, in part, be explained by a decline in domestic demand following the floods. The damage to homes, infrastructure and transmission networks may have reduced electricity consumption in the affected areas, leaving more power available for export. The scale of the damage to Nepal's power infrastructure was significant.

Nepal's Energy Ministry had said in an earlier statement that the floods had affected 13 hydropower plants, including several under-construction projects, as well as a solar power plant.

Ghimire said the floods knocked around 430 MW of capacity out of the system due to damage to transmission lines, which disrupted the evacuation of electricity.

Of this, around 74 MW of hydropower capacity was directly damaged by the floods.

FULL REPORT ON
WWW.INDIANEXPRESS.COM

KHAMENEI ORDERS ARMED FORCES TO PREPARE IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO ANY ATTACK

Iran, Qatar hold talks amid threat of strikes by US after midterms

Doha proposed seven-day US-Iran trust-building plan, say officials

Reuters

Dubai, Cairo, October 31

IRANIAN NEGOTIATORS held talks in Doha with Qatari mediators on Saturday to discuss paths out of war in the Gulf, a source told Reuters, as diplomats try to avert a new outbreak of fighting after the US midterm elections this week.

Saturday's talks in the Qatari capital followed more than 12 hours of discussions on Friday between Iranian and Qatari envoys in Tehran, said the source, who was briefed on the negotiations and spoke on condition of anonymity. The source said the talks were being coordinated in regular contacts



The slogan on a banner in Farsi reads, 'Flag of battle is still hoisted', at Palestine Square in Tehran on Friday. AP

with Washington.

Countries in the region have been anticipating that US President Donald Trump, who has held off on strikes on Iran during the weeks leading up to Tuesday's midterm elections, could restart attacks once the voting is over. Iran has repeatedly said it would respond

to new attacks by striking at US and Israeli targets in neighbouring countries.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei issued a statement on Saturday ordering the armed forces to be prepared to respond to any attacks. The Iranian military later announced it was taking steps

to improve its readiness.

"Any level or type of threat must be met with an immediate, impactful, and geographically unrestricted response," Khamenei, who has not appeared in public since replacing his father slain at the war's outset, said on Saturday in the statement posted on his official Telegram account.

He said that senior commanders had reported high readiness along the Gulf coast, in and around the Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman, and on Iran's northwestern and south-eastern borders.

Trump, who launched the war alongside Israel in February, has repeatedly hinted at plans to restart strikes on Iran. Last week he called on Israelis ahead of their own election to keep his wartime ally Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in power so the two leaders can "finish the job".

But Washington has also lately taken steps to indicate it is

open to diplomacy. Earlier this week, Vice President JD Vance, who led the US delegation at previous rounds of talks with Iran, wrote a letter to a hardline senior Iranian security official, which the New York Times and Wall Street Journal described as an initiative to see if it was possible to restart talks.

Trump played the letter down, saying he approved it only to discuss the possibility of letting more medical supplies into Iran: "I said if you want to do that, that's ok. Basically, it's getting supplies in to help people that are not well."

In the latest Qatari-mediated discussions, the Qataris brought a proposal to Tehran a week ago for a seven-day plan, under which the US and Iran would take daily steps to build trust ahead of broader peace talks, the source briefed on the negotiations said. A senior Iranian official told Reuters on Friday that this proposal was not deemed satisfactory by Tehran.

Iran's Supreme Leader warns U.S., Israel against launching new attacks

Trump says he is considering new military action against Iran after the U.S. midterm elections while Netanyahu speaks of a 'historic opportunity' to topple Tehran's govt.; Islamic republic's Army spokesperson warns of 'expanding scope of war'

Agence France-Presse

TEHRAN

Iran's Supreme Leader on Saturday warned the United States and Israel against launching new attacks following their threats to resume strikes after crucial elections.

President Donald Trump has warned of new military action after the U.S. holds midterm elections, saying last weekend he was weighing up whether to "finish them off".

In Israel, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has spoken of a "historic, one-time opportunity" to topple the Iranian government.



An anti-Israel board, with '5064 days until the destruction of Israel' written on it, on a street in Tehran, Iran. REUTERS

Both countries are holding legislative polls that could determine the direction of the conflict, with Israel having voted on Tuesday and the U.S. midterms

set for next week.

"If the enemies once again launch military or terrorist attacks, it is the armed forces of the Islamic republic and the Iranian

nation that will determine the time and conditions for ending them," Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said on Saturday in a statement.

'Impactful response'

"Any level or type of threat must be met with an immediate, impactful and geographically unrestricted response," he is said to have told top military commanders in a meeting.

The encounter was the first reported between Mr. Khamenei and military top brass and included armed forces chief of staff Ali Abdollahi, Army chief Amir Hatami and Revolutionary Guards commander Ah-

mad Vahidi.

The Supreme Leader has not been seen publicly since he took the helm in March after the killing of his father Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in U.S.-Israeli strikes at the outset of the war.

Mr. Khamenei also ordered commanders to update Iran's target list to include "all types of tangible and intangible assets belonging to the American-Zionist enemy".

Earlier on Saturday, Iranian Army spokesperson Mohammad Akaraminia warned that any resumption of hostilities would only expand the scope of the war.