Restoring combat strength among priorities: IAF chief

Air Chief Marshal Ashutosh Dixit lays stress on vigilance and operational readiness, self-reliance, strategy, and unity of effort across the tri-services; highlights importance of Air Force personnel

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

Newly appointed Air Chief Marshal Ashutosh Dixit on Sunday outlined his priorities under the acronym "VAYU", focusing on vigilance and readiness, *aatmanirbharta* (self-reliance), innovation and unity of effort.

On Saturday, he assumed charge as the 29th Chief of the Air Staff, succeeding Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh, who retired after 43 years of service in the Indian Air Force.

Air Chief Marshal Dixit received a ceremonial guard of honour at the parade ground of the Air Force Station before formally assuming command of the force.

Emphasising the need for operational preparedness amid an evolving security environment, he said the character of warfare is being reshaped by emerging technologies and systems, including drones, long-range precision weapons, space, cyber, artificial intelligence, and the electromagnetic spectrum.

"The Air Force, while transforming into the force that India will need in the next decade, must always be ready to fight and win," he said.



Air Chief Marshal Ashutosh Dixit during the guard of honour ceremony at the Air Force Station in New Delhi on Sunday. ANI

'VAYU' framework

Under the "VAYU" framework, "V" stands for vigilance and readiness. The Air chief stressed that every squadron, radar, air defence unit and Air Warrior must be prepared to respond at a moment's notice. Restoring the IAF's combat strength to its sanctioned level would also be among his foremost priorities.

"A" stands for *aatmanirbharta* (self-reliance), with indigenous Tejas Mk1A and Mk2, Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), Indian sensors and weapons systems identified as key priorities. He said the force would focus on fighting with Indian solutions and ensuring adequate numbers to meet operational requirements.

"Y" represents *Yukti* (strategy) or ingenuity, with an emphasis on innovation in doctrine, procedures and technology, including networked and AI-enabled command and control systems, layered counter-drone defence, responsive maintenance, force protection and the use of near-space as an operational domain.

"U" stands for unity of effort, underscoring the importance of joint planning and operations with the Army, Navy and national agencies. He said air power delivers the greatest impact when integrated from the initial planning stage.

IAF's motto

Highlighting the importance of personnel, Air Chief Marshal Dixit said the training, professional excellence, morale, safety, welfare and dignity of Air Warriors, Agniveervayu, civilian employees, veterans, Veer Naris and their families would receive his personal attention.

Referring to Operation Sindoor, he acknowledged the leadership of his predecessor, Air Chief Marshal A.P. Singh, under whom the IAF had demonstrated what precise and decisive air power could achieve. He also thanked him for handing over a force in a high state of operational readiness.

Reassuring the country of the IAF's preparedness, he said the force remains vigilant, ready and resolute, and will continue to transform itself to deliver whenever the nation calls. "*Nabha Sparsham Deeptam*," (touch the sky with glory) he said, reiterating the IAF's motto.

SHAURYA SSB TEL (8368910450)

GST mop-up surges 23% to ₹2.31 lakh cr. on festive demand

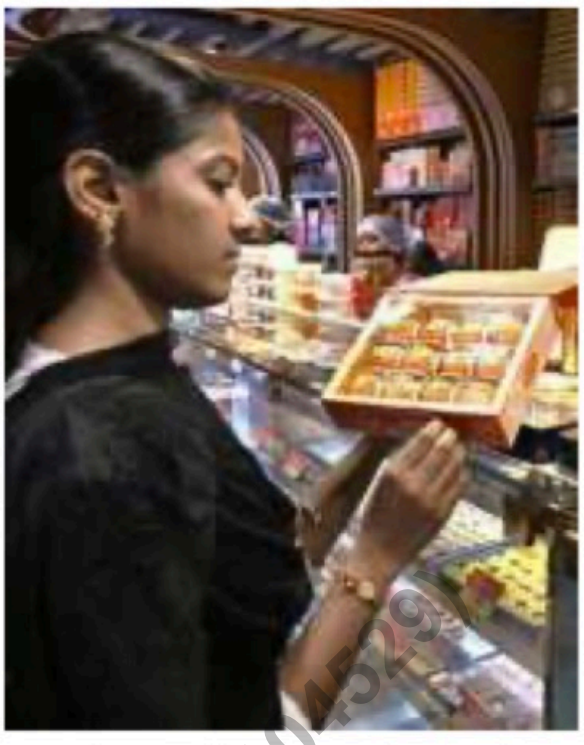
Press Trust of India
NEW DELHI

Goods and Services Tax collections jumped 23% year-on-year to the second-highest level of over ₹2.31 lakh crore in October as festive buying boosted domestic demand, according to government data released on Sunday.

October is the second consecutive month when monthly gross GST crossed ₹2 lakh crore, and second only to the record of about ₹2.43 lakh crore mop-up in April. Also, the 22.9% year-on-year growth clocked during the month is the fastest recorded pace of gross mop-up in the current fiscal year. Gross GST collections from domestic sales rose 16% to over ₹1.59 lakh crore, and revenues from imports climbed 42% to ₹72,246 crore.

The ₹2.31 lakh crore collection includes Central GST mop-up of 42,935 crore, State GST of ₹51,340 crore and Integrated GST of over ₹1.37 lakh crore, data showed. GST refunds increased 6.5% year-on-year to ₹27,934 crore in October. After adjusting for refunds, net GST collections rose 26% to over ₹2.03 lakh crore in October.

In April-October, gross GST collection grew 13.2% to over ₹14.77 lakh crore.



October is the second straight month when monthly gross GST crossed ₹2 lakh crore.

Net collections rose 13% to over ₹12.69 lakh crore.

Manoj Mishra, Grant Thornton Bharat, Partner and Tax Controversy Management Leader, said October collections capture the festive-season demand cycle, which typically brings higher consumer spending, retail activity and movement of goods across sectors.

"The focus now should be on sustaining domestic revenue growth and ensuring that the benefits of GST 2.0 translate into stronger compliance, smoother input tax credit flows and faster refunds for businesses," Mr. Mishra said.

EY India Tax Partner, Saurabh Agarwal, said the GST collections reflect the continued resilience of the Indian economy despite global headwinds.

SHAURYA SSB TRG (6368104529)

Navy to launch ₹80,000-cr. warship project

Saurabh Trivedi
NEW DELHI

The government has given a major push to the Indian Navy's next-generation destroyer programme amid the growing maritime security challenges posed by China and Pakistan, both of which are strengthening their own underwater warfare capabilities.

The Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), chaired by Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, had recently accorded in-principle approval to futuristic warships under Project 18A.

The delivery of the warships is expected to begin five to 10 years after the contract is signed, given the complexity and scale of the programme.

A senior Defence Ministry official confirmed the development. The proposed programme, estimated to cost around ₹80,000 crore, aims to develop a new generation of stealth-guided missile destroyers equipped with advanced weapons, sensors, and technologies, the official said.

The warships are expected to have nearly 75% indigenous content, with both defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs) and private sector companies eligible to participate in the competitive bidding process, the official added.

The programme assumes significance as China continues to expand its naval presence in the Indian Ocean Region and enhance its submarine fleet, while Pakistan is also strengthening its underwater warfare capabilities with the induction of advanced submarines.

The evolving security environment has underscored the need for India to strengthen its surface combat fleet and maintain a credible maritime deterrence across the Indian Ocean Region.



The next-generation destroyers are expected to substantially enhance multi-domain combat capabilities. REUTERS

Futuristic capabilities

Several existing destroyers of the Indian Navy are due for decommissioning in coming years, making the induction of advanced frontline surface combatants essential to maintaining the fleet's operational strength, the official added.

The futuristic destroyers, to be designed by the Navy's Warship Design Bureau, are expected to feature significantly more advanced systems than the Visakhapatnam-class destroyers.

These warships are likely to have enhanced firepower, sophisticated surveillance sensors, improved air defence systems, and advanced anti-submarine warfare capabilities, providing the Navy with greater operational flexibility against emerging maritime threats.

The Indian Navy currently operates around 12 or 13 relatively new guided-missile destroyers, which form the backbone of its surface combat fleet and provide capabilities across air defence, anti-surface warfare, and anti-submarine operations.

These include the Visakhapatnam-class, Kolkata-class, and Delhi-class destroyers.

The existing warships are equipped with an array of advanced weapon systems, including BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, surface-to-air missiles, naval guns, close-in weapon systems, and anti-submarine warfare equipment.

The next-generation destroyers are expected to substantially enhance India's firepower, surveillance, and multi-domain combat capabilities.

SHANKAR IAS ACADEMY (9968104529)

Bhutan builds 108 stupas in 9 hours, dedicates Chorten no. 76 to Modi

Rahul Karmakar
GELEPHU (BHUTAN)

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuk on Sunday dedicated one of the 108 Buddhist stupas erected in a nine-hour construction feat to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as a mark of appreciation for India's support for the country's ambitious Gelephu Mindfulness City (GMC) project.

About 40,000 trained volunteers built the 108 Jangchub Chortens in what could be a potentially record-breaking royal initiative to lay the spiritual foundation of the planned city.



Bhutan dedicated Chorten no. 76 to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for India's support to the Gelephu project. RAHUL KARMAKAR

Spiritual City

About 240 km south-southeast of Bhutan's capital, Thimphu, Gelephu borders Assam's Chirang district. King Wangchuk envisions the city as a spirituality-driven global economic hub.

The King, other members of the royal family, top officials and foreign dignitaries faced Chorten Number 79 from the ceremonial ground as thousands of people around chanted a six-syllable Tibetan Buddhist mantra a billion times while the volunteers completed the mission between 3 a.m. and noon. About two hours later, the focus shifted to Chorten Number 76, which the King dedicated to Mr. Modi "as an enduring symbol" of his "profound appreciation" for the latter's "unwavering commitment and India's steadfast support for the realisation" of GMC. Bhutanese officials said the number was chosen because Mr. Modi turned 76 more than a month ago.

Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijiju, who represented India for 'Project 108', thanked the King. "This remarkable milestone is an enduring symbol of the deep spiritual and civilisational bonds between our two nations," he said, congratulating Bhutan on the achievement.

Collective spirit

Each 15 metres tall and 108 metres apart, the Jangchub Chortens, or Buddhist stupas, stand in a single meandering file along the Mau Chhu River, Gelephu's lifeline.

Addressing the people after the completion of Project 108, King Wangchuk said: "People from every walk of life and every generation came together to make this possible," stressing the Bhutanese collective spirit and ability to achieve "anything impossible".

CHAURIA SSB IRG (8368104529)

Indians remit $20 billion abroad in 8 months of 2026

Mumbai: Outward remittances from India under the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) have crossed $20 billion during the first eight months of 2026.

Resident Indians remitted approximately $20.09 billion abroad during January-August 2026, compared with an estimated $19.08 billion in the corresponding period of 2025.The increase of approximately $1 billion, or 5.26%, highlights the growing appetite among Indian residents for sending money overseas, even as the country continues to grapple with forex requirements.

Significantly, reports that RBI suggested considering curbs on remittances to contain forex outflows under LRS should be treated as a serious warning rather than dismissed as routine regulatory speculation, analysts say.

The figures show an increasing transfer of financial resources from India to the rest of the world.

The most striking feature is the dominance of overseas travel. Remittances under this category totalled $10.96 billion during January-August 2026, making it the largest component of LRS outflows. The corresponding figure for same period last year was $10.67 billion. Travel remittances stood at $1.658 billion in April 2026, and were at $1.63 billion in August 2026, RBI data shows.

As per RBI data, remittances for education-related travel, including fees and hostel expenses, nearly doubled from $450.16 million in March to $855.52 million in August. Other travel remittances, including holiday trips and payments towards international credit card transactions, rose from $623.05 million in March to $713.80 million in August. ENS

SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368104529)



Why Delhi mustn't take its eyes off Pakistan-Maldives

ADITYA GOWDARA SHIVAMURTHY

MALDIVIAN PRESIDENT Mohamed Muizzu made a three-day state visit to Pakistan last month. Both countries signed 20 MoUs "to strengthen their relations in various fields", including socio-economic development sectors, cybersecurity, drug trafficking, and defence and maritime security. They aim to increase trade from $13 million to $200 million in the next two years. The visit underscores Muizzu's interest in diversifying ties beyond India. This, however, risks compromising India's long-term security and strategic interests.

Geography and religion have largely shaped Maldives-Pakistan relations. Despite a stronger bond with India, the Maldives has, in principle, practiced neutrality and advocated for regional integration and peace between New Delhi and Islamabad. Pakistan has also assisted the country with medical and religious education and even supported the construction of the parliament building. Engagements with Pakistan have increased under Muizzu since his early days. This trend is more visible in defence partnerships. For instance, in addition to Pakistan, the Maldives has signed MoUs on defence cooperation with China and Turkey. The Maldives has also procured armoured vehicles from the UAE, and even joined the Saudi Arabia-led maritime defence coalition.Under Muizzu, the Maldives is thus enjoying growing defence ties with all members of the Mecca pact. For Islamabad, the visit is an opportunity to challenge India's presence and interests in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Since Operation Sindoor, Pakistan and China have held trilaterals with Bangladesh and Afghanistan. Pakistan has advocated for SAARC revival, and even proposed a new South Asian bloc without India. It also plans to expand its naval presence in the Bay of Bengal.

The visit to Islamabad underscores Muizzu's interest in diversifying ties beyond India

India's policy with respect to the Maldives has been pragmatic. It has used economic assistance to create leverage and long-term goodwill. It offered multiple extensions for T-bills worth $150 million; restructured debts; extended credit lines worth Rs 4,850 crore; and currency swaps worth $400 million and Rs 30 billion.

New Delhi's policy has merit. With presidential elections just two years away and Muizzu's growing unpopularity, India does not want to fuel anti-Indian rhetoric and nationalism. Given strong religious and historic ties, India knows that Pakistan cannot be completely isolated from the archipelago nation. Instead, some MoUs between Pakistan and the Maldives, like countering cyber crimes and drug trafficking, could even benefit India. But, defence and security-related developments will have implications. Muizzu's meeting with Asim Munir, Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff, to discuss military cooperation, regional security, and defence relations and their interest to strengthen institutional relations, defence partnerships, and professional exchanges have fueled fears of Pakistan being another stakeholder in the Maldives' security architecture. These developments will crowd an already crowded IOR and bring Pakistan closer to India's maritime boundaries. India will therefore have to make clear its security concerns, and communicate its red lines.

The writer is associate fellow, Neighbourhood Studies, Observer Research Foundation

Iran says new war could last longer after Trump threats

The U.S. President would not be in a position to dictate the timing or conditions of its conclusion, says Tehran; Revolutionary Guards add that there would be 'no geographic limitations' in conflict

Agence France-Presse
TEHRAN

Iran warned on Sunday that any renewed war with the United States could last longer than the previous round of fighting, after President Donald Trump said he still had to "take care" of more targets.

Diplomatic efforts to end the West Asia war have been punctuated by repeated threats from the U.S. and Israel to resume bombardments as they hold crucial elections.

"A potential future war could last longer than previous conflict, and the American President would not be in a position to dictate the timing or the conditions of its conclusion," said Army spokesperson Mohammad Akraminia, according to Iranian state television.



Committed stance: An Iranian woman holds Iran's national flag on a street in Tehran on Sunday. AFP

Mr. Akraminia's remarks followed Mr. Trump's suggestion that the U.S. could swiftly strike its remaining targets in Iran.

"We still have to take care of, I would say one or two sites, but we can do that in 10 minutes," Mr. Trump told presspersons at his Florida residence.

Top military and political officials in Iran have warned against any new attack.

Revolutionary Guards spokesman Hossein Mohebbi on Sunday echoed a warning issued a day earlier in a written message by Iran's new Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei.

"In a conflict with America, there are no geographical limitations; a vast theatre has been defined for inflicting damage upon the enemy," Mr. Mohebbi said, according to state television.

SHAURYA TRC (8368104509)

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SHAURYA SSB TRG (8368 104529)