

# Ozone layer on track to return to 1980s levels by mid-century: WMO report

NEW DELHI, Sept 16 (PTI)

THE Earth's protective ozone layer is on track to return to 1980s levels by the middle of this century, with the 2024 Antarctic ozone hole smaller than in recent years, the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said in a new report.



The WMO Ozone Bulletin 2024 said lower ozone depletion this year was partly due to natural atmospheric factors but stressed the long-term improvement reflects the success of global action.

The bulletin was released on World Ozone Day, which also marked the 40th anniversary of the Vienna Convention that laid the foundation for international cooperation on ozone protection. "Forty years ago, nations came together to take the first step in protecting the ozone layer, guided by science, united in action," said UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

"The Vienna Convention and its Montreal Protocol became a landmark of multilateral success. Today, the ozone layer is healing. This achievement reminds us that when nations heed the warnings of science, progress is possible," he said.

The Montreal Protocol has already phased out more than 99 per cent of controlled ozone-depleting substances once widely used in refrigeration, air conditioning, firefighting foam and hairspray.

# Rajnath exhorts Armed Forces to **REMAIN ALERT TO DEAL WITH INVISIBLE CHALLENGES**

KOLKATA, Sept 16 (PTI)

ASSERTING that the nature of warfare is continuously evolving, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Tuesday exhorted the Armed Forces to go beyond the traditional concepts of war and remain alert and ready to deal with invisible challenges.

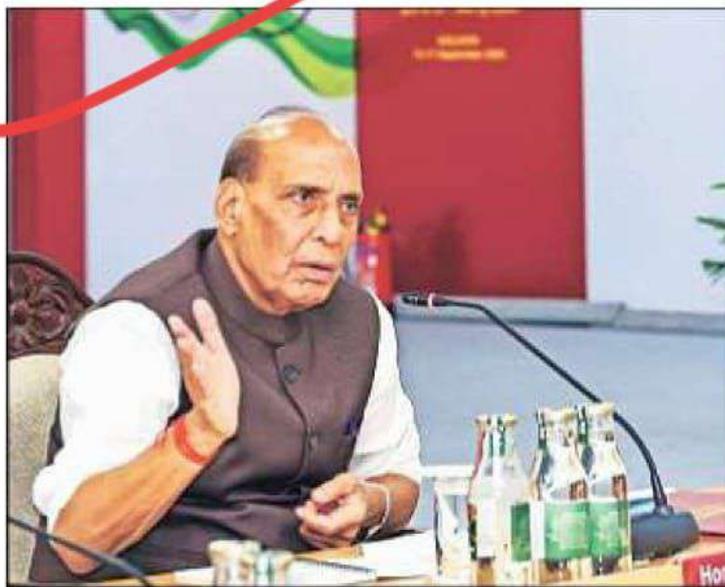
He said that the recent global conflicts have underlined the relevance of a "technology-friendly" military.

Addressing the 16th Combined Commanders' Conference (CCC) 2025 in Kolkata, the defence minister asked the Armed Forces to be ready to deal with "invisible challenges emanating from unconventional threats such as information, ideological, ecological and biological warfare."

Singh emphasised the need for constant assessment of the changes taking place across the globe, and its impact on the security system of the country, in view of the turbulent global order, regional instability and the emerging security landscape.

"Wars of today are so sudden and unpredictable that it is extremely difficult to foretell their duration. It can be two months, a year, or even five years. We need to be prepared.... We need to ensure that our surge capacity remains sufficient," he said.

He commended the Armed Forces for their "outstanding performance" and "exemplary professionalism" in the planning and execution of Operation Sindoor



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addresses the Combined Commanders Conference at the Indian Army's Eastern Command headquarters, in Kolkata. (PTI)

in May, that was launched in the aftermath of the Pahalgam terror attack, which claimed the lives of 26 civilians, mostly tourists. "Operation Sindoor has demonstrated that strength, strategy and self-reliance are the three pillars that will give India the power it needs in the 21st century. Today, we have the capability to face any challenge with the help of indigenous platforms and systems coupled with the indomitable courage of our soldiers. This is the real strength of Aatmanirbhar Bharat," Singh said.

Operation Sindoor, which was

conceived as a punitive and targeted campaign to dismantle the terror infrastructure across the Line of Control and deep inside Pakistan, showcased a calibrated, tri-services response embodying precision, professionalism and purpose, according to an official.

Terming India's defence sector as an amalgamation of offensive and defensive capabilities, the defence minister called upon the commanders to be proactive in their approach and strive to build the 'Sudarshan Chakra', an air defence mechanism, as envisioned by Prime Minister

Narendra Modi. Stating that a committee has been formed to examine the project and prepare a "realistic action plan", he suggested devising a medium-term plan for the next five years and a long-term plan for the next ten years to bring the vision to fruition. The Defence Minister underscored the importance of synergy among the Armed Forces as well as with other agencies, terming it as "essential" to deal with future challenges.

In this context, he mentioned the creation of tri-service logistics nodes and tri-service logistic management application to promote integration and jointness in the defence sector, while also highlighting the attention being paid to greater civil-military fusion.

Maintaining that the country's defence sector is centred around modernisation, operational readiness, technological superiority and credible deterrence, Singh called for focusing on the mantra of "JAI" (Jointness, Aatmanirbharta and Innovation) given by PM Modi in the inaugural session of the conference on Monday.

Batting for deeper engagement with the industry and academia in developing future-ready technologies, Singh reaffirmed PM Modi's vision to further enhance the role of the private sector in creating a robust defence innovation ecosystem and "making the domestic industry the biggest and best in the world".

# India added 23 GW renewable capacity in Apr-Aug FY26: Joshi

NEW DELHI, Sept 16 (PTI)

INDIA added 23 GW of clean capacity in last 5 months of the ongoing fiscal, continuing its journey of achieving 500 GW renewable capacity by 2030, Union Minister Pralhad Joshi said on Tuesday.

The Union Minister for New and Renewable Energy made the remarks while addressing 'FT Live Energy Transition Summit India' in the national capital.

"So far in this fiscal, India added 23 GW of renewable capacity in just 5 months. Now this is a feat that most nations cannot achieve in several years," Joshi said addressing the gathering which included international delegates. Citing examples of the country's progress in the area of renewables, he said India has expanded its installed

non-fossil capacity to approximately 252 GW as of today.

"We have already crossed the milestone of halfway to our target of 500 GW. Moreover, India has also achieved 50 per cent of its installed electricity capacity from non-fossil fuel sources, 5 years ahead of the target set under its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) to the Paris Agreement. In fact, among the G20 countries, India is the only nation to achieve its 2030 goals by 2021," he noted.

He further said that around 2 million (20 lakh or 20 per cent of the targeted 1 crore) homes have been solarised under the PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana.

The scheme is projected to add

30 GW of solar capacity through rooftop installations.

To put it in perspective, the number of families that will benefit from Surya Ghar exceeds the population of countries like

Austria, Switzerland, Israel, or Singapore, Joshi said.

"You see, approximately 51 per cent of countries have populations under 10 million. So that's the scale

at which we are operating! Through PM Surya Ghar scheme, millions of households have become producers of clean power," the Minister said.

He further said that India's rise in renewable energy has been extraordinary. In just a few years, India has become a global force, rapidly expanding solar, wind, and green hydrogen projects.



# India, US trade talks 'positive'

NEW DELHI, Sept 16 (PTI)

**THE** day-long discussions with the visiting US team on a bilateral trade deal were positive, and both sides agreed to push for an early and mutually beneficial conclusion of the agreement, the Commerce Ministry said on Tuesday.

"It was decided to intensify efforts to achieve early conclusion of a mutually beneficial trade agreement," the

Ministry said in a statement after a day-long meeting with the US officials.

The discussions with visiting US Chief Negotiator Brendan Lynch on the proposed bilateral trade agreement were positive and forward looking.

Lynch, Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia, reached the national capital on Monday evening to hold deliberations

## Discussions with US on trade deal positive, both sides to push for early conclusion

on the proposed India-US bilateral trade agreement.

From India's side, the discussions were led by Rajesh Agarwal, Special Secretary, Department of Commerce.

An official said that both

sides will continue the discussions in virtual mode and will also decide on a mutually convenient date for the next physical meeting.

The day-long talks are important as the US has

imposed a steep 50 per cent tariff on Indian goods.

This was the first visit by a high-ranking US trade official after the imposition of a 25 per cent tariff and an additional 25 per cent penalty on Indian goods entering the American market for buying Russian crude oil.

India has earlier described the steep 50 per cent tariff as unfair and unreasonable.

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