

# Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit to be next VCAS of IAF

NEW DELHI, June 30 (PTI)

AIR Marshal Ashutosh Dixit, a senior military officer with over 3,300 hours of flying experience, is set to be the next Vice Chief of the Air Staff (VCAS).

He will take charge on July 1, succeeding Air Marshal Nagesh Kapoor, an official said on Tuesday.

Air Marshal Dixit was commissioned into the fighter stream of the Indian Air Force in December 1986. He is an alumnus of National Defence Academy, Khadakwasla; Defence Services Staff College (Bangladesh) and National Defence College, New Delhi, the defence ministry earlier said.



The air force officer is a “Qualified Flying Instructor and Experimental Test Pilot with over 3,300 hours of flying experience on over 20

types of aircraft, including Mirage-2000, MiG-21 & Jaguar,” the ministry said.

Before being appointed as VCAS, he was serving as Chief of Integrated Defence Staff

(CISC) at Headquarters Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS). He assumed the appointment in May 2025.

Air Marshal Dixit has also commanded a premier fighter training base in the Southern Sector, where his leadership led to the base being adjudged the best in the Command.

# India defends FATF at UN, calls it pillar of anti-terror financing

UNITED NATIONS, June 30 (IANS)



**P Harish**

INDIA has defended the international anti-terrorism funding organisation against attacks on it by Pakistan saying it was motivated by fear of scrutiny.

Calling the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) “an indispensable pillar of the global counter-terrorism financing and anti-money laundering architecture”, India’s Permanent Representative P Harish said on Monday, “Attempts to question its credibility often reflect fear of scrutiny rather than genuine process-related concerns”. “Our history shows that critical terrorist financing risks have not emerged anonymously”, he said. “They have been sponsored, including by some state actors”.

Diplomatically, he did not name Pakistan, but the target of his comments was clear, as Pakistan has accused the FATF of being politically weaponised against it when it was placed on its “grey list” of countries under increased monitoring.

Harish was speaking at an event India co-sponsored with France on “Joining Forces to Counter Terrorism Financing in the Context of Evolving Threats and Emerging Technologies” held on the sidelines of the UN’s Counter-Terrorism Week.

“For decades now, my country, India, has confronted cross-border terrorism, and new digital technologies are only making the sources, the methods, and channels used for the flow of assets more complex”, he said.

# US envoys arrive in Qatar for meetings on Iran tensions

DUBAI, June 30 (AP)

TWO US envoys arrived in Qatar on Tuesday for talks with mediators about the implementation of an initial deal to end the war in Iran, an official said.

The visit by Steve Witkoff, US President Donald Trump's special Mideast envoy, and Jared Kushner, his son-in-law, comes after a weekend of crossfire in the Persian Gulf over efforts to reopen the Strait of Hormuz to shipping traffic.

The envoys won't be having direct negotiations with Iranian diplomats while in Qatar's capital, Doha, said Majed al-Ansari, a spokesman for Qatar's Foreign Ministry. Instead, mediators are working for the time being as go-betweens for the talks, which won't include any high-level officials, he added. Such indirect negotiations have happened in the past between Iran and the US. However, the two previous rounds of talks collapsed into the 12-day war Israel launched against Iran in 2025 and the recent Iran war. "We're not expecting any high-level Iranian officials at the moment, but as I said, the technical meetings are ongoing ... And they haven't stopped since then," al-Ansari told journalists at a weekly news conference.

Iran was also sending a delegation to Qatar this week. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmail Baghaei said Tuesday that Iran has had no plans for a meeting with the US side at any level in the coming days.

# Monsoon session of Parliament likely from July 20

NEW DELHI, June 30 (PTI)

THE Monsoon session of Parliament is likely to commence from July 20 and is expected to go on for three weeks, officials said on Tuesday. The Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs (CCPA) is yet to take a final decision. Usually, Monsoon and Winter sessions have 20 sittings and are spread over four weeks. But there have been precedents of shorter sessions.

The Monsoon session comes after the ruling BJP's victories in West Bengal, Assam and Puducherry.

The rebellion in TMC and Shiv Sena (UBT) will also play out in the forthcoming session.

A decision by Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla on the demands of 20 TMC and six Shiv Sena (UBT) MPs seeking recognition as separate groups is awaited.

In the Rajya Sabha, after newly elected and re-elected MPs took oath, the political numbers further tilted in favour of the ruling NDA.

The last session ended in disappointment for the government as a Constitution amendment bill to implement reservation for women in legislatures in 2029 and increase the number of seats of the Lok Sabha was defeated in the Lower House.

The government is now redrafting the bill to possibly increase Lok Sabha seats of all states uniformly by 50 per cent.

# Gen Dhiraj Seth takes over as Army chief

■ Delhi Bureau & Agencies  
NEW DELHI, June 30

**GENERAL** Dhiraj Seth took over as the next Chief of the Army Staff (COAS), succeeding



General Upendra Dwivedi upon his retirement on Tuesday. An officer of the Armoured Corps, General Seth becomes the first officer from the combat branch

to head the Army since 1997 after General Shankar Roychowdhury.

With nearly four decades of military service, he brings extensive operational, strategic and organisational experience, having served in key command, staff and capability-development appointments.

His tenure, which is expected to run until August 2028, comes at a critical juncture as the Army focuses on force modernisation, integrated theatre command structures, and enhanced operational preparedness along the borders with China and Pakistan.

A graduate of the National Defence Academy, General Seth was commissioned into the Armoured Corps in December 1986. Throughout his distinguished career, he has served in a wide range of operational, strategic and institutional roles, playing a key role in enhancing the Indian Army's combat capabilities and long-term transformation.

Commanding formations at every level in diverse operational environments, his assignments include heading an Armoured Regiment in the desert sector, an Armoured

Brigade in the western theatre, and a Counter-Insurgency Force in Jammu and Kashmir.

As a Lt General, he commanded the Sudarshan Chakra

*(Contd on page 5)*

**'Wars will be more integrated, theatre-oriented in future'**



Outgoing Chief of the Army Staff General Upendra Dwivedi at the National War Memorial to pay tribute, during his ceremonial farewell, in New Delhi. (Report on last page) (PTI)

# Iran President briefs PM Modi on recent developments in West Asia

NEW DELHI, June 30 (PTI)

**PRIME** Minister Narendra Modi had a telephonic conversation on Tuesday with President of Iran Masoud Pezeshkian, who briefed him on the recent developments in West Asia and the way forward.

The Prime Minister said he reiterated in his interaction with the Iranian leader the importance of freedom of navigation in the Strait of Hormuz for India and the world.

Prime Minister Modi welcomed the understanding reached, and reiterated India's consistent position that all issues must be resolved through dia-



**PM Narendra Modi**



**Masoud Pezeshkian**

logue and diplomacy, a statement issued by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) said.

Modi reiterated the need for continued efforts to ensure lasting peace and stability in the region, and for safeguarding free-

dom of navigation and commerce.

During the telephonic conversation, the President of Iran briefed Prime Minister Modi on the recent developments in West Asia and the way forward, the statement said.

Modi also wrote on 'X': "Spoke with the President of Iran, Dr. Masoud Pezeshkian, on the recent developments in West Asia. Welcomed the progress made in the negotiations and expressed hope that continued efforts will lead to lasting peace in the region. Reiterated the importance of freedom of navigation in the Hormuz Strait for India and the World."

# UN report flags USD 800 bn climate fund gap in Asia-Pacific

NEW DELHI, June 30 (PTI)

RATHER than treating cooling solely as a demand-side energy issue, initiatives supported by the India Cooling Action Plan frame access to safe and efficient cooling as a public health priority linked to climate mitigation and adaptation goals, a report by a United Nations body said on Tuesday.

The report titled 'Asia-Pacific synergies report: Advancing synergistic solutions to the triple planetary crisis and the SDGs' said that framing cooling as a health and safety issue strengthened political support and facilitated coordination across energy, urban, labour and social sectors.

"Conventional expansion of air conditioning risks locking in higher emissions, worsening air pollution and exacerbating energy poverty if not managed carefully," the report by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) said.

It said that while policies to manage these issues are often national in scope, implementation has pro-

gressed mainly through programmes and pilot initiatives in several States and urban regions, reflecting the diversity of climate risks, electricity systems and cooling demand across the country.

"In response to rising temperature and extreme heat, India has advanced sustainable cooling initiatives, including programmes implemented through the Energy Efficiency Services Limited and supported by the India Cooling Action Plan (ICAP), with implementation taking place through programmes and pilot initiatives across several States and cities," the report read.

Citing measures like promotion of high-efficiency cooling appliances, improvements in building energy performance and demand-side management approaches that reduce peak electricity loads during extreme heat events, the report said the initiatives are supported by policies that align heat-risk management, energy planning and climate strategies.

It also mentioned that the initiatives integrate health objectives

into energy efficiency, cooling technology deployment and system planning.

The report also highlighted conserving biodiversity through nature-positive pathways, and underscored that achieving this in the Asia-Pacific region requires an enabling environment capable of supporting integrated, systemic and transformative action.

"Synergistic approaches are regarded as potentially transformative responses to interrelated biodiversity and other environmental challenges. Their potential reflects the fact that biodiversity is not an isolated environmental issue but the foundation of resilient and inclusive development itself," the report said.

"This recognition is reinforced by growing evidence that healthy ecosystems are critical to achieving a broad range of sustainable development goals (SDGs): climate resilience, food security, water provision and human health," it added.

Noting operationalising a nexus approach requires considerable thought, the report highlighted.

# MSC to buy 49 pc in Adani's Vizhinjam port for \$1.4 billion

NEW DELHI, June 30 (PTI)

ADANI Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) on Tuesday said Switzerland-based MSC, the world's largest shipping transport and logistics conglomerate, will acquire 49 per cent stake in its Vizhinjam port in Kerala for about USD 1.4 billion. Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) will make the acquisition through its arm Terminal Investment Limited (TiL). As per the deal, TiL will invest USD 1.397 billion, equivalent to its proportionate 49 per cent share of total deal value of USD 2.85 billion.

The strategic collaboration represents the single largest foreign private investment in Indian port infrastructure and cements



Vizhinjam's emergence as a dominant transshipment gateway in the Indian Ocean region, APSEZ said in a statement.

"APSEZ And MSC Group have entered into a definitive agreement under which MSC Group, via its container terminal operating and investing arm, TiL, will invest for 49 per cent interest in Adani Vizhinjam Port Private

Limited (AVPPL), the concessionaire for Vizhinjam port," it said. The Vizhinjam port has a capacity of 1.6 million Twenty-foot Equivalent Unit (TEUs) and is undergoing expansion that will increase its capacity 3.5 times to 5.7 million TEUs by December 2028. The strategic collaboration will deliver significant advantages for APSEZ, including enhanced volume visibility and accelerated ramp-up ahead of plan, driven by additional cargo volume and higher share of Bangladesh cargo, largely dependent on competing Southeast Asian transshipment hubs.

This will strengthen Adani group's presence on East Africa trade routes and elevate relay cargo volumes.

Commissioned in December 2024, the Vizhinjam port is India's first deep-draft mega transshipment port with 1.6 million TEU capacity. It is strategically located just 10 nautical miles from the East-West shipping route connecting Europe, the Persian Gulf and the Far East. The port features a natural draft of 18 to 20m, a 2.9 km breakwater, an 800m berth, and advanced infrastructure, including 8 quay cranes and 24 fully automated yard cranes.

During FY26, Vizhinjam port handled 1.3 million TEUs.

APSEZ also operates 4 international ports across Australia, Colombo, Israel and Tanzania.

APSEZ whole-time Director and CEO Ashwani Gupta said, Vizhinjam port has emerged as a premier transshipment.