

Rajnath in Lanka to boost ties

COLOMBO, Sept 8 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh arrived in Sri Lanka on Tuesday for a three-day visit aimed at strengthening bilateral ties and expanding cooperation in defence and regional maritime security.

“Looking forward to a productive engagement with the leadership of Sri Lanka during the visit,” Singh said ahead of his visit to the island nation.

He will also be interacting with the Indian diaspora.

“Besides our longstanding partnership as well as deep historical and civilisational ties, Sri Lanka is one of our most important partners under the Neighbourhood First and



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh is welcomed by Indian High Commissioner to Sri Lanka Santosh Jha upon his arrival at Bandaranaike International Airport in Colombo on Tuesday. (PTI)

MAHASAGAR initiatives,” he added. Singh was received at the Bandaranaike International

Airport by Sri Lanka's Deputy Minister of Defence Maj General
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Navy chief to visit Aus, NZ from today to bolster maritime ties

NEW DELHI, Sept 8 (PTI)

THE Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Krishna Swaminathan will undertake an official visit to Australia and New Zealand starting September 9, aiming to bolster naval cooperation and strengthen maritime ties with the two countries.

During the visit, the Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) will hold bilateral discussions with the senior leadership of the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the Royal New Zealand Navy (RNZN), officials said on Tuesday.

The visit is aimed at further strengthening the Indian Navy's bilateral cooperation with the two navies.

"The visit to Australia builds upon the growing momentum in India-Australia relations, following the third India-Australia Annual Summit held in July 2026 and the second India-Australia Defence Ministers' Dialogue held



Chief of the Naval Staff Admiral Krishna Swaminathan

in June 2026," a senior official said.

The two countries have continued to "deepen cooperation" in defence and security, including maritime security and regional cooperation, they said.

During the visit, Admiral Swaminathan will hold bilateral discussions with the senior leadership of the RAN and engage with senior Australian defence

leadership.

"The engagements will provide an opportunity to review ongoing naval cooperation and explore avenues for strengthening operational interaction, interoperability, information sharing, training and professional exchanges between the two navies," the official said.

The CNS will also visit key operational and training establishments and interact with personnel of the RAN.

The engagements will include discussions on maritime capabilities, emerging technologies and professional military education, reflecting the expanding scope of cooperation between the two navies.

The visit to New Zealand builds upon the renewed momentum in India-New Zealand relations, following the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to New Zealand in July 2026, the official added.

Russia welcomes India's peace efforts to end Ukraine conflict

■ President Putin to hold bilateral talks with PM Modi on Friday on the margins of the BRICS summit to boost ties in areas of trade, investment, energy and technology



Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov speaks to media in New Delhi on Tuesday. (PTI)

NEW DELHI, Sept 8 (PTI)

RUSSIA on Tuesday said it would welcome any peace efforts by India to end the Ukraine conflict, noting that Moscow's strategy aligns closely with New Delhi's position for a resolution through

dialogue and diplomacy.

The remarks by Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov came days before Russian

President Vladimir Putin visits India to attend the BRICS summit. There have also been renewed international efforts, including by the Trump administration in recent days, to find a path toward resolving the conflict.

"We welcome the willingness of the Indian side to contribute. We also welcome the efforts of American President (Donald) Trump," Peskov said during an online media interaction with Indian journalists.

The Kremlin spokesperson said President Putin is scheduled to hold bilateral talks with Prime Minister Modi on Friday

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PM targets Oppn at freight corridor completion

Modi inaugurates, lays foundation stones for Rs 35,000 cr worth devpt projects

VADODARA, Sept 8 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday took a dig at the Opposition over the newly-inaugurated dedicated freight corridor, saying critics would still complain like a "naraz fufa" (grumpy uncle) and manufacture grievances, while also dismissing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's campaign against the Government as "jhooth ki goonj" (echo of lies).

He inaugurated and laid foundation stones for Rs 35,000 crore-worth development projects.

Speaking at the inauguration of three key sections of the Western Dedicated Freight Corridor, connecting Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Navi Mumbai with Dadri in Uttar Pradesh, and marking the project's comple-



(L) Prime Minister Narendra Modi being presented an idol of Lord Ganesh during the inauguration and foundation stone laying of various development projects at an event in Vadodara, Gujarat on Tuesday. (R) Maharashtra Governor Jishnu Dev Varma along with Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Deputy Chief Ministers Eknath Shinde, Sunetra Ajit Pawar and others during the flag off of 4 freight trains on western dedicated freight corridor, in Mumbai. (PTI)

tion, Modi praised his administration's pace of execution and called the former Congress-led UPA regime's working speed

sluggish. "After 2014, with your blessings, when I reached Delhi, and as soon as we arrived there, we began accelerating this proj-

ect. Work on the dedicated freight corridor has been completed today," Modi said.

The cultural reference to the

fufa (uncle) was apparently used because in several parts of the country the paternal aunt's

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'Expand global reach of UPI'

MUMBAI, Sept 8 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday urged the fintech ecosystem to expand the global reach of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), connect it with local systems in other countries, and help the diaspora save on remittance costs.

In his address after the inauguration of the 7th edition of the Global Fintech Fest here, Modi said the UPI platform is now live in 11 countries and has also connected (Contd on page 5)

Russian strikes on Kyiv claim two lives; end pause in attacks



Fire-fighters run to a shelter during Russia's repeated massive air attack in Kyiv, Ukraine on Tuesday. (AP/PTI)

KYIV, Sept 8 (AP)

TWO people were killed and at least 10 injured after Russia struck the Ukrainian capital Kyiv with drones and missiles overnight on Tuesday, local authorities said.

The attack comes after a pause over the weekend as US envoys Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff arrived in Kyiv for their first official visit in a renewed push to end the war between Russia and Ukraine.

Damage and fires occurred in at least five districts of the capital, Ukraine's State Emergency

Service said, while a statement on Telegram by the Kyiv City Military Administration said damage to civilian infrastructure was located in at least 16 locations. A 26-story, non-residential building was hit in the Holosiivskyi district.

At another location in the same district, a fire broke out and the flames spread to a nearby non-residential building.

Rescuers saved one person during a search and two people were evacuated from an apartment in a 16-story, residential building.

Iran increases gasoline price as economy struggles

TEHRAN, Sept 8 (AP)

IRAN early on Tuesday introduced a higher price for its heaviest users of gasoline, state media reported, in the latest economic pinch caused by months of war. It's the second such hike since December.

Such gas price increases can be sensitive and contribute to inflation. An increase in 2019 sparked nationwide protests and

a crackdown that reportedly killed over 300 people.

Without specifically mentioning the war with the United States, the Government's announcement cited the "current situation", adding that the extra money from the price increase will be given to households.

Under the new system, people buying more than their quota of 110 litres (29 gallons) of

gasoline a month now must pay 100,000 rials (about 7 cents) per liter, or twice as much as they have been paying since December.

Iran still has some of the world's lowest gasoline prices, but the price increase adds to daily pressures for many of the country's more than 90 million people. Already, the currency has been dropping to record lows, and purchasing power has weakened.

On Monday, the US dollar was trading at 2.22 million rials.

Keramat Veis Karami, the CEO of the state oil distribution company, on Monday said the new gasoline rate would affect 15 per cent of consumers, the official IRNA news agency reported.

The CEO said consumption reached a record high at 145 million litres per day in August, while domestic production capacity was 122 million litres per day.

Indian, Chinese armies hold second session of high-level dialogue on border situation

NEW DELHI, Sept 8 (PTI)

THE Indian and Chinese Armies held their first high-level commanders' flag talks in two sessions on both sides of the frontier in the Arunachal Pradesh sector this week in line with the outcome reached at last month's Special Representatives dialogue in Beijing, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Tuesday.

National Security Advisor Ajit Doval had held the Special Representatives (SR) talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi that focused on delimitation of the frontier and sustaining work on trans-boundary cooperation as well as to maintain peace along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said the Senior Highest

Military Commander-Level Flag Meeting was held at Wacha on the Indian side in Arunachal Pradesh on September 6 and Damai on the Chinese side on Sept 7.



“Pursuant to the understandings reached between the Special Representatives of India and China in August 2025 and August 2026, and subsequent discussions at the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination meetings held in Beijing and New Delhi in May and August 2026 respectively, the first Senior Highest Military Commander-Level Flag Meeting was held at Wacha on the Indian side in Arunachal Pradesh on Sept 6 and Damai on the Chinese side on Sept 7,” Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing.

'India's indigenous bullet train trials to start by May-June next year'

NEW DELHI, Sept 8 (IANS)

INDIA'S first indigenously developed bullet train is expected to commence trial runs by May or June next year with commercial inauguration likely within two to four months after testing, Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw said on Tuesday.

Addressing the 'NaMo for Viksit Bharat' event in Vadodara, the Minister said the first body frame of the high-speed train had recently been completed and sent for squeeze testing.

"By May or June of next year, India's own bullet train will be on the tracks for testing. After a testing period of 2-4 months, the bullet train will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi," Vaishnaw said.

The Minister said project was being developed in line with the vision of an Atmanirbhar Bharat and would significantly reduce trav-

el time between Vadodara and Mumbai.

"When you ride the bullet train from Vadodara, you will reach Mumbai in just an hour and a half," he said. Vaishnaw said construction work on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train corridor was progressing rapidly with the Surat-Vapi section expected to be completed by December this year. Highlighting broader reforms in the railway sector, he said the Government was modernising railway operating systems, reservation platforms and construction protocols.

"We are reforming and modernising everything, from operating systems and reservation systems to old construction protocols," he said. Vaishnaw said several long-pending railway projects had been completed in recent years, citing the Chenab Bridge and the rail connectivity project linking Mizoram to the national railway network.