

India, Sri Lanka vow to work jointly for regional security

Sri Lanka will never allow its territory to be used for any activities inimical to India's security interests, said President Dissanayake

COLOMBO, Sept 9 (PTI)

DEFENCE Minister Rajnath Singh on Wednesday met Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake and discussed ways to further strengthen the defence, economic, maritime and regional partnerships between the two countries.

Singh arrived in Sri Lanka on Tuesday for a three-day visit, becoming the first Indian defence minister to visit the island nation in 38 years.



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh pays homage at the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) Memorial, in Colombo on Wednesday. (PTI)

"The two leaders held substantive discussions on issues covering the entire spectrum of the multi-faceted partnership between the two nations, char-

acterised by traditionally warm relations and mutual trust," the Indian Defence Ministry said.

Singh conveyed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's best

wishes to Dissanayake and underlined that the citizens of the two countries share deep friendship based on strong historical and civilisational links and extended felicitations on the successful completion of two years of his Government.

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"The two sides reaffirmed that as civilisational twins, close neighbours & maritime partners, India and Sri Lanka would continue to work together for their development & welfare of the people while working jointly to ensure the safety, security, peace and prosperity of the region," the Ministry said in a statement.

Singh later described his meeting with Dissanayake as "warm and extremely productive."

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India, Thailand discuss ASEAN trade pact review

NEW DELHI, Sept 9 (PTI)

INDIA and Thailand on Wednesday discussed the progress of the ongoing review of the ASEAN free trade agreement on goods.

Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal and Suphatee Suthumpun, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Commerce of Thailand, also discussed ways to boost trade and investments between the two countries, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said in a statement.

“The two sides exchanged views on the progress of the review of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) and emphasised the need for deeper bilateral engagement through the India-Thailand Joint Trade Committee (JTC) in a time-bound manner,” the ministry said.

Thailand is a member of the ASEAN bloc. Other members are Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

The review is high on India's priority list to make it more user-friendly, simple and trade-facilitative for businesses. The pact was signed in 2009. ASEAN is an important trade partner of India with about a 10 per cent share in India's global trade.

In a separate statement, the ministry said National Industrial Corridor Development Corporation Limited (NICDC) participated in the first-ever INNOPROM India 2026, being held from 9-11 September at Bharat Mandapam.

Cabinet approves 3 multitracking projects covering five States

■ **Delhi Bureau and Agencies**

NEW DELHI, Sept 9

THE Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Wednesday approved three Railway Ministry projects with a total cost of Rs 10,783 crore.

These projects include construction of the fourth line between Kharagpur-Jharsuguda and Katni-Pendra Road section as well as the third line between Bilaspur (Uslapur)-Pendra Road section.

"The increased line capacity will significantly enhance mobility, resulting in improved operational efficiency and service reliability for Indian Railways. These multi-tracking proposals are poised to streamline operations and alleviate congestion," a press note said.

"The projects are planned on PM-Gati Shakti National Master

Cabinet okays 5 railway projects in South India

NEW DELHI, Sept 9

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved five multitracking railway projects with an investment of Rs 10,021 crore.

The five projects, covering 17 districts across Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Telangana, will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 540 km.

Plan with focus on enhancing multi-modal connectivity and logistic efficiency through integrated planning and stakeholder consultations.

These projects will provide

seamless connectivity for movement of people, goods, and services," it added.

The three projects covering 14 districts across the States of West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh, will increase the existing network of Indian Railways by about 656 kms.

'WILL ENSURE STRONG CONNECTIVITY': PM MODI HAILS CABINET DECISION ON RAILWAY PROJECTS: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday hailed the Union Cabinet's approval of eight railway projects worth more than Rs 20,000 crore, saying these will ensure stronger connectivity, faster passenger movement and lower logistics cost.

The Prime Minister said the five major railway projects worth over Rs 10,000 crore will ensure better rail connectivity in South India.

El Nino puts India on high health-risk radar, says WHO

WEATHER WATCH

HEAT STRESS | Can worsen cardiovascular, respiratory, kidney and metabolic illnesses

DENGUE | WHO flags India at high/very high risk

LEPTOSPIROSIS | High/very high risk, particularly with heavy rain and flooding

MALARIA | High/very high risk in parts of Northeast India

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES | Risk may increase with displacement or reduced access to healthcare



EL Nino 2026: What Happens Next?

JULY-SEPT 2026
Rapid development towards a strong El Nino

AUG-OCT 2026
Expected to exceed strong El Nino thresholds

END-2026
Event expected to peak towards end of the year

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New Delhi: With dengue cases rising in several parts of the country, a WHO assessment has flagged India among nations facing high or very high health risks as a strengthening El Nino event alters weather patterns across South Asia.

El Nino is a periodic warming of surface waters in central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean that can disrupt weather patterns around the world, influencing rainfall and temperatures far beyond the Pacific.

WHO's Global Public Health Situation Analysis – El Nino 2026, released on Sept 5, has identified India as being at high or very high risk, with most of South Asia expected to experience drier-than-normal conditions and above-normal heat during Aug-Oct.

The warning comes at a time when vector-borne diseases are already rising in parts of the country. In Delhi, 90 dengue cases were reported in Aug, the highest monthly tally this year, taking the total to 311 by Aug 29. Malaria

cases also rose from 17 in July to 53 in Aug, taking the year's tally to 119, according to Municipal Corporation of Delhi.

The agency does not link current dengue or malaria cases directly to El Nino, but calls it a risk modifier, with impacts depending on local weather, vulnerability and health-system capacity.

For India, heat is a key concern, with higher temperatures potentially causing heat exhaustion and heat-stroke and worsening cardiovascular, respiratory, kidney and metabolic illnesses.

Extreme heat may also affect maternal and newborn outcomes. Other concerns include malnutrition, food insecurity and worsening non-communicable diseases. Changes in rainfall and water availability could affect food production, while heavy rain and flooding can increase the risk of leptospirosis, particularly where sanitation and drainage are poor. WHO has also flagged the India-Nepal and India-Bhutan borders, where displacement could increase the risk of cross-border disease transmission.

Yemen rebels claim dozens of new strikes against Saudi

Yemen's Houthi rebels reported dozens of Saudi airstrikes Wednesday as daily attacks continued in a conflict that has reignited during the West Asia war, with hundreds of people killed in fighting near the Red Sea.

More than 50 attacks targeted several regions, including the flashpoint areas of Taiz and Hodeida, the scene of fierce clashes between the Houthis and the Saudi-backed govt, the rebels said. "It's a catastrophe, and the attacks are ongoing," said Mohammed Khudairi, one of nearly 20,000 people who fled the fighting, according to the International Organisation for Migration. "We managed to leave, but others remain trapped there," he said at a displacement camp of wood-and-straw huts on the Red Sea coast. AGENCIES

Pak warns Houthi attacks could activate joint defence pact

Pakistan said there should be "no ambiguity" that an attack on any one of the three members of the newly formed Mecca Defence Alliance would be treated as an attack on all, as it warned that the pact could become operative following Houthi strikes on Saudi Arabia. In a TV interview, Pakistan's defence minister Khawaja Asif said Islamabad would honour its commitments under the pact. Asif, however, said he was not aware of any contact between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia following the attacks. He stressed that the pact did not authorise the three countries to launch attacks against another state on their own initiative. PTI

IAEA reports Iran to UNSC for first time in 20 years

Vienna: The UN atomic watchdog's board on Wednesday reported Iran to the UNSC for the first time in 20 years for failure to cooperate in a long-running probe into uranium traces detected by inspectors at various undeclared sites in Iran. Twenty-three countries on the IAEA's 35-member board of governors voted for the resolution at IAEA headquarters in Vienna.

China, Russia and Niger opposed it, while eight countries abstained and one didn't vote as it was in arrears, according to diplomats. The resolution was put forward by the US, Britain, France and Germany. Western officials suspect that the uranium traces could provide further evidence that Iran had a secret nuclear weapons programme until 2003. Iran says that it's not pursuing nuclear weapons. AP