Can't separate military and technological preparedness in 21st century: Rajnath

NEW DELHI, Nov 3 (PTI)

INDIA'S bid for 'Aatmanirbharta' must be understood as a quest for technological sovereignty, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Tuesday, asserting that self-reliance means ensuring critical defence requirements are not held hostage to external dependencies.

In his address at the Delhi Defence Dialogue hosted here by a think-tank, Singh also underlined the importance of technology in warfare, and said military preparedness in the 21st century cannot be separated from technological preparedness.

"As we set our eyes on 2047, our aim in the defence sector should be ambitious," he said.

The Defence Minister also asserted that the difference between conventional and unconventional warfares is "becoming increasingly blurred" today.



Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addresses the Delhi Defence Dialogue 2026, organised by the Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (MP-IDSA), in New Delhi on Tuesday. (PTI)

The dialogue, hosted by Delhi-based Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA), brought together senior officers from the Defence Ministry, domain experts from the country and abroad, and industry representatives.

"Aatmanirbharta must be understood as a quest for technological sovereignty. It does not mean producing everything ourselves."

"It means ensuring that our critical defence requirements are not held hostage to external dependencies," the Defence Minister said.

He also cautioned that self-reliance without collaboration may "limit our technological horizons", and said Aatmanirbharta should strengthen indigenous capabilities and facilitate co-development.

Speaking at a different sesion the Chief of Integrated Defence Staff to Chairman Chiefs of Staff Committee, Air Marshal Tejinder Singh, underlined that "Aatmanirbharta is not just a slogan" as much has been done in the defence sector, and hoped that more will be done in the area to harness its full potential.

Need to build a navy that can fight, sustain without any constraints: Navy chief

NEW DELHI, Nov 3 (PTI)

CALLING 'Aatmanirbharta' a "strategic necessity", Navy chief Admiral Krishna Swaminathan on Tuesday said that there is a need to build a navy that can fight, sustain and adapt without being constrained by extraneous factors or external dependencies. In his address at the Delhi Defence Dialogue, hosted here by a think tank, the Navy chief emphasised that Aatmanirbharta doesn't mean isolation, and pitched for collaborating with friendly foreign countries "from a position of strength, and not from a position of weakness".

While underlining the need for building greater self-reliance in defence, he also said all stakeholders need to put their minds and hearts together to build a navy that can "answer the requirements of the 21st-century national security of India and make every single one of us proud".

Trump: US to cut off $4bn in aid to Israel by yr-end

President Donald Trump said he had an agreement with Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu for the US to cut off $4 billion in aid by the end of the year. "Bibi Netanyahu and I have made a deal," Trump said in a Tuesday interview on Fox News. "We give Israel $4 billion a year, and we made a deal months ago that we're stopping — and they're fine with it." "They've become a very successful country. They don't need it. And we won't be paying anymore," he added.

The US currently provides Israel with $3.8 billion a year in military assistance under a 10-year agreement originally negotiated by the Obama administration that lasts through 2028.

US aid to Israel has become a flashpoint ahead of Tuesday's midterm elections that will determine control of Congress. Trump's announcement is an attempt to neutralise the issue that's been seized on by Democrats running for office. In Michigan, Democratic candidate Abdul El-Sayed has criticised the assistance, saying it could be better spent on priorities at home. Trump said he saw ending the aid as a way to counter Democratic attacks on the issue. BLOOMBERG

IISc Bengaluru, 5 IITs among Asia's top 100 universities: QS Rankings

NEW DELHI, Nov 3 (PTI)

INDIAN Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru and five Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have figured in Asia's top 100 universities even as all of them have fallen several positions since last year, according to the QS Rankings announced on Tuesday.

India continued to remain Asia's second most represented higher education system, with 325 ranked universities, including 34 new entrants, second only to Mainland China.

According to the London-based Quacquarelli Symonds (QS), IIT Delhi remains India's highest-ranked university, placing 66th in Asia despite a year-on-year decline, while all six of India's top-ranked institutions dropped in the rankings.

IIT Delhi was ranked 59th last year and slipped to 66th, followed by IISc Bengaluru, which was at 64th spot last year and has slipped to 79th rank.

IIT Bombay fell from 71st to 83rd, IIT Madras fell from 70th to 85th, IIT Kharagpur fell from 77th to 90th, and IIT Kanpur fell from 77th to 97th.

"India has built remarkable research capacity. Its universities lead Asia for the number of institutions in the top 10 for Papers per Faculty, and 15 share first place for staff with PhD. The challenge now is to translate this strength more consistently into research impact and international recognition. "Although several leading institutions have fallen in this year's rankings as competition grows across Asia, India has a strong foundation on which to build. Continued investment in research quality, international partnerships and global visibility will help sustain its progress," said QS Senior Vice President Ben Sowter.

The University of Delhi also slipped out of the top 100, from 95th to 106th. Chandigarh University, Lovely Professional University and Jamia Millia Islamia are among the Indian institutions climbing the table.

India also increased its representation among the top 200, with 21, up from 20 last year and 17 in 2018.

According to the QS Rankings, India leads Asia for universities excelling in research output per faculty member, with 27 universities in the regional top 50 for papers per faculty and five in the top 10, more than any other higher education system.

"Exceptional doctoral capacity underpins this performance, with 15 Indian universities sharing first place for staff with PhD, more than double the total of the next strongest-performing system," the QS said in a statement.

"Employer Reputation remains a relative strength, with IIT Bombay and IIT Delhi placing seventh and 10th respectively - the first Indian universities in Asia's top 10 - though employer recognition remains concentrated among a small number of institutions despite the scale of India's labour market," it added.

Trump faces midterm reckoning with Congress control at stake

Polls Project Democratic Sweep As Republicans Face Gridlock

Chidanand Rajghatta | TNN

Washington: Americans streamed into polling stations across the country Tuesday in one of the most consequential midterm elections in modern US history, with Donald Trump facing the prospect of losing control of Congress and spending the final two years of a lame duck presidency negotiating with an opposition that has plenty of scores to settle.

The MAGA boss used his closing campaign appearance to rhapsodise about the renovation of the Lincoln Reflecting Pool, a fittingly ironic finale to a campaign built around his promise to drain the swamp. By Tuesday night (Wednesday morning IST), if polls are correct — and they often aren't — he may discover that his own political fortunes are sinking.

Trump's closing appearance was billed as a final midterm appeal to voters agitated by war and cost of living issues, but the 53-minute event often resembled a municipal contractor's presentation to a homeowners' association. Rather than delivering a reassuring economic and political argument, he walked his audience through the pool's renovation, complete with photos, elaborate explanations of the plumbing issues, and some outright falsehoods, leaving political pundits slack-jawed at the tone-deaf approach to the elections, where Republicans are on the backfoot.

It was a bizarre climax to a campaign in which the MAGA supremo barnstormed roughly 20 states, addressing more than 30 rallies at which, in his own words, he "ranted and raved" in marathon two-hour speeches while treating congressional elections as a personal referendum despite asserting he is not on the ballot.



Reuters

Pro-constitution protesters, who call themselves 'The Bridge Brigade', wave at motorists above a highway on election day in Portland, Maine

Latest surveys suggest voters may be preparing to hand the President and his party a pasting, with one model by poll-

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ster Nate Silver giving Democrats roughly a 95% chance of capturing the House and an 80% chance of taking the Senate. Prediction market Kalshi has put Democrats winning the House at about 93% odds and taking the Senate at 71%.

However polls measure intentions, not votes. Republicans are counting on Trump's ability to mobilise his loyalists, while Democrats are hoping that the discontent reflected in surveys translates into actual ballots. If, however, Republicans do lose both chambers as is being widely projected, Trump will enter the final two years of his presidency in territory familiar to three recent predecessors, though none approached the prospect with quite his combination of combativeness and appetite for confrontation.

Barack Obama experienced the most recent equivalent after the 2014 midterms, when Republicans took the Senate and strengthened their House majority, leaving a Democratic President facing a Congress controlled entirely by the opposition. The result was legislative gridlock, with the most consequential episode coming in 2016, when Obama nominated Merrick Garland to the Supreme Court following Antonin Scalia's death. Senate Republicans, led by Mitch McConnell, refused even to schedule confirmation hearings, arguing that the vacancy should be filled by the next president. Garland's nomination expired without a vote.

It was an extraordinary exercise of Senate power, with consequences that extended far beyond Obama's remaining months. Trump subsequently nominated Neil Gorsuch for the vacancy, and it ultimately helped reshape the Supreme Court for a generation.

Similarly, George W. Bush ran into a Democrat-controlled House and Senate after the 2006 midterms, in the final two years of his presidency. The political backdrop was the deeply unpopular Iraq War. Democrats used their congressional majorities to intensify oversight, challenge the administration's Iraq policy and push domestic legislation. Bush nevertheless negotiated on some issues, including the minimum wage and other measures, while foreign policy issues like the US-India nuclear deal found bipartisan support.

Bill Clinton had perhaps the most instructive experience of being hamstrung by a congressional opposition. After the 1994 "Republican Revolution," he faced the formidable speakership of Newt Gingrich in a relationship that was hardly cordial. It produced two govt shutdowns in 1995-96, a succession of bruising legislative confrontations and, eventually, Clinton's impeachment in 1998. His high approval rating towards the end of his term demonstrated that an opposition-controlled Congress can sometimes become an opportunity for a president to reposition himself as a centrist.

US carries out 'defensive strikes' on Iran's island; Qatar steps up mediation

Dubai: Iran and the US are still far from a deal to end their war, a senior Iranian official told Reuters Tuesday, while mediator Qatar stepped up efforts to bridge differences and avert a renewed escalation after the US midterm elections.

Overnight, the US carried out "defensive" strikes on Iran's Qeshm island targeting surface-to-air missiles used against US assets, a US official said. Another official said the strikes appeared limited and did not signal a return to major combat operations.

Iranian state media reported explosions being heard on the islands of Qeshm and Hengam in the strategic Strait of Hormuz, and in the nearby mainland area of Bandar Abbas. Unlike earlier in the war, the strikes were not publicly announced. US President Donald Trump Tuesday renewed threats of possible military action, telling Fox News Channel: "I'm not looking to... kill lots of people. If we have to, we'll have to."

Qatar has intensified mediation efforts amid fears the conflict launched by the US and Israel in Feb could flare up again after Tuesday's midterms. "Mediators are working hard to narrow gaps between Tehran and Washington," the senior Iranian official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Qatari mediators travelled to Tehran Monday night for talks on a version of a draft US-Iran deal discussed over the past eight days.

"Tehran's conditions must be met if the US wants Hormuz reopened," the Iranian official cautioned, referring to Iranian demands including waiving oil sanctions, ending the US naval blockade and releasing frozen Iranian funds. Mohsen Rezaei, secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, later said the US response to Iranian demands "was not convincing", adding that Washington "must fully and explicitly address Iran's seven conditions and act upon them". "Only in this case will the Strait of Hormuz be reopened," he wrote on X. On Monday Trump raised doubts about whether he would follow through on a threatened resumption of military strikes against Iran and said a deal with Tehran could happen.



An Iranian woman holds a portrait of Iran's supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei during a anti-US rally in Tehran's Enghelab Square Tuesday

Qatar's foreign ministry spokesperson Majed al-Ansari said both the US and Iran were reviewing proposals put forward by mediators. While the Qatari team that travelled to Tehran had returned to Doha, talks were continuing. "There are intensive joint regional efforts underway to avoid escalation," he told a news briefing, adding that Qatar remained hopeful a deal could still be reached to pave the way for future negotiations.

An official briefed on the talks said feedback from Washington and Tehran was expected within the next 36 hours. A senior Iranian official told Reuters later on Tuesday that there is no deadline for exchanging messages with Washington through mediators or reviewing responses. REUTERS