

Union Minister Rajnath Singh calls for stronger global naval cooperation at MILAN

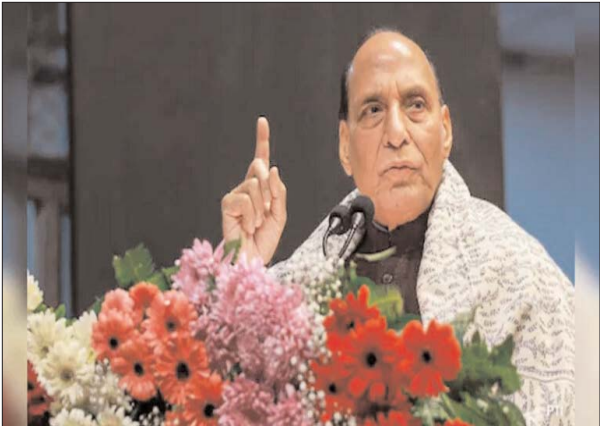
VISAHAPATNAM,

FEB 20: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has urged the international community to work collectively to address the increasingly complex and interconnected challenges in the maritime domain, guided by mutual respect and a spirit of cooperation.

Addressing Navy Chiefs and Heads of Delegations from 74 countries during the inaugural ceremony of Exercise MILAN here on Thursday Singh asserted that traditional threats now coexist with emerging challenges such as piracy, maritime terrorism, illegal fishing, trafficking, cyber vulnerabilities, and disruptions to critical supply chains.

He added that climate change is intensifying natural disasters, making humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations more frequent and demanding.

"The role of navies in international peacemaking has only increased over time. There has been an exponential economic growth during the last few decades leading to massive increase in international trade and transport. There has also been a rise in contests for ownership of straits and channels, some-



times causing threats of flare up," an official release issued last night quoted Singh as saying.

He noted that increasing international attention to underwater resources, particularly rare-earth minerals is adding a new dimension to the tension. Singh also stressed the need to safeguard waters from the terrorist activities which are spreading tentacles across countries and regions.

Emphasising that no single navy, however capable, can address the emerging challenges alone, he underscored the importance of enhanced cooperation among the Navies to ensure a safer and more secure future.

The union minister highlighted the robust legal framework provided by the

UN Convention on the Law of Seas (UNCLOS) to address matters related to international waters that can be further strengthened through a comprehensive global naval architecture.

According to him, UNCLOS provides a comprehensive and time tested mechanism for dispute redressal and peaceful co-existence among nations, and the comprehensive global naval architecture would facilitate information sharing, protect links of communications and curbs criminal activities, including terrorism on high seas, along with the usual role of protecting the national boundaries on a global scale. Pointing out that the established international order is witnessing an upheaval, Rajnath Singh said

platforms like MILAN bring together professional expertise, build mutual trust, enhance interoperability, and enable coordinated responses to common challenges.

"When our ships sail together, when our sailors train together, and when our commanders deliberate together, we build a shared understanding that transcends geography and politics and provides an opportune moment to deliberate on this idea of cooperation," he said.

Highlighting India's longstanding commitment to maritime cooperation, the Defence Minister said the country's approach shaped by the vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR), has evolved into Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security And Growth Across Regions (MAHASAGAR).

"This evolution from SAGAR i.e., seas to MAHASAGAR i.e., oceans reflects India's deepening commitment to engaging with partners in the region and beyond," he said.

Rajnath Singh added that the International Fleet Review 2026 was a clear affirmation of goodwill, professionalism and mutual respect among the world's navies.

Shakira headed to India for Feeding India Concert 2026

NEW DELHI, FEB 20:

Global pop icon Shakira, popular for global chartbusters such as "Hips Don't Lie", "Whenever Wherever" and "Waka Waka (This Time for Africa)", is all set to perform in Delhi and Mumbai this April for the Feeding India Concert 2026.

The Colombian superstar and multiple Grammy-winner is hugely popular in India. She will headline shows in Mumbai on April 10 and in Delhi on April 15, the organisers announced in a release.

Feeding India, a not-for-profit along with District by Zomato, is organising the third edition of the Feeding India Concert 2026. The shows are presented by HSBC India, produced and exclusively ticketed by District by Zomato.



Shakira's performance is aimed at amplifying national dialogue around hunger and malnutrition.

"Performing in India has always been special to me, and I'm excited to connect with my fans across Mumbai and Delhi. The Feeding India Concert is about more than music; it's about standing to-

gether to ensure every child has access to the nutrition they need to thrive," Shakira said in a statement.

Rahul Ganjoo, CEO, District by Zomato, said, "This is a defining moment for the Feeding India Concert. Bringing an artist of Shakira's global stature to two cities represents our commitment

to scaling impact while delivering world-class entertainment.

"Music has the unique power to unite people across boundaries, and we're leveraging that to drive meaningful conversations that can transform lives. This is what the Feeding India Concert stands for: experiences that move you emotionally while moving the needle on hunger." The Feeding India Concert is a community-driven initiative designed to accelerate progress toward the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of Zero Hunger by 2030. The concert serves as an awareness platform bringing together diverse stakeholders in recognition that solving hunger requires collective action across all sectors of society. (Agencies)

Raj Kundra appears before court in Bitcoin money laundering case; granted bail

MUMBAI, JAN 20:

A special court here on Friday granted bail to businessman Raj Kundra after he appeared before it in a money laundering case linked to an alleged Bitcoin scam.

Special judge for cases under Prevention of Money Laundering Act R B Rote had in January issued a summons to Kundra after taking cognizance of a charge sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate in the case.

Kundra appeared before the court and filed a bail plea, which the court allowed.

His lawyer, Prashant Patil, submitted that Kundra had cooperated with the ED's investigation since 2021. All the documents related to the case were already in the possession of the probe agency, therefore his custody was not needed, said the lawyer.

The court, while taking cognizance of the charge



sheet, had said that the statements of witnesses and other evidence "prima-facie shows" that Kundra and Dubai-based businessman Rajesh Satija were involved in an offence punishable under the PMLA.

Kundra, the central probe agency has alleged, received 285 Bitcoins from the alleged mastermind of Gain Bitcoin Ponzi scam Amit Bhardwaj for setting up a Bitcoin min-

ing farm in Ukraine.

As the deal did not materialise, Kundra was still in possession of 285 Bitcoins presently valued at more than Rs 150 crore, the ED claimed.

As per the charge sheet, Kundra claimed to have acted only as a mediator, but did not provide "any underlying documentary evidence to prove the same".

An agreement titled "Term

Sheet" was signed between him and Amit's father Mahendra Bhardwaj, and hence, Kundra's claim of being only a mediator was not tenable, the charge sheet said.

The fact that Kundra remembers the exact number of Bitcoins received in five specific tranches seven years after the transaction "solidifies the fact that he was indeed the recipient of Bitcoins as a beneficial owner and not acted merely as a mediator", the ED said.

Despite having multiple opportunities since 2018, Kundra failed to provide the wallet addresses where the 285 Bitcoins were transferred.

He cited damage to his iPhone X as the reason for the missing information, which was an attempt to destroy evidence, the charge sheet said. (PTI)

Expelled Congress leader Navjot Kaur fires fresh salvo at Punjab unit chief Warring

CHANDIGARH, FEB

20: Expelled Congress leader Navjot Kaur Sidhu has renewed her attack on Amrinder Singh Raja Warring, the party's Punjab unit chief, alleging that he bought 100 acres of land in Zirakpur, of which 60 acres were "snatched illegally" from innocent people using fake signatures and thumb impressions.

Warring, on his part, has rubbished the charge and said he would not comment on a person whose "mental condition is not right".

In a post on X on Thursday night, Kaur said, "Raja Warring ji, come and reply in court how you have bought 100 acres of land in Zirakpur? Only 40 acres you could buy with your looted money, 60 acres you snatched illegally from innocent people by doing fake signs and taking thumb im-



pressions of people. 2400 cr scam with ex-Punjab Congress in-charge from Rajasthan! Reply in court and get ready for jail. Prepare yourself ji.

Best of luck." Kaur, the wife of ex-India cricketer and former Punjab Congress chief Navjot Singh Sidhu, also accused Ludhiana MP Warring of looting the youth.

In another post, she said, "Raja Warring, you are the first one who has not even

spared the youth of Punjab linked to Congress by putting up a one-member joining fee at 75 rupees. And just imagine how many youngsters have been looted by you. Could you please tell me how many youths you have helped get jobs or good placements? "Is the youth only to be used to gather people, organise rallies and shout slogans for you? Can you explain how you plan to spend around 7.5 crores you

will collect from the youth of Punjab, many of whom are living hand-to-mouth?" Asked about Kaur's accusations, Warring on Friday said that it was not appropriate for him to comment on a person whose "mental condition is not right".

The Punjab Congress suspended Kaur from its primary membership last December after she sparked a row with her "Rs 500 crore for chief minister's chair" remark.

On January 31, Kaur claimed that she had quit the party and attacked Warring for "damaging" the state unit, calling him "the most horrific, incapable, corrupt president ever".

On February 6, Bhupesh Baghel, the Congress general secretary in charge of Punjab, confirmed that Kaur had been expelled from the party. (PTI)

Answer to 'abject surrender' lies in 'grips', 'chokes' placed on PM: Rahul on India-US trade deal

NEW DELHI, FEB 20:

Stepping up his attack on the government over the interim US trade deal, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Friday said the answer to why Prime Minister Narendra Modi agreed to a deal, where India gives so much and appears to get so little, and make an "abject surrender" lies in the "grips" and "chokes" placed on him.

The leader of opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha also claimed that with this deal, India is going to become a "data colony".

Gandhi, who has been attacking the BJP-led government and accusing it of a sell-out through the deal, posted a video on X in which he invoked his recent speech in Parliament in which he had drawn a Jiu-Jitsu analogy.

In his post on X, Gandhi said, "Why did I use a Jiu-Jitsu analogy in my Parliament speech on the trade deal? Why were our farmers sacrificed to please the Americans? Why was India's energy security compromised by allowing the US to dictate our oil supplies?" "Why agree to increase US

imports by \$100 billion a year without a reciprocal promise? Why did I say this deal could turn India into a data colony? Why would Modi ji agree to a deal where India gives so much and appears to get so little? The answer to this abject surrender lies in the "grips" and "chokes" placed on the PM.

In the video, Gandhi said a lot of people have asked him why he used a Jiu-Jitsu analogy in his Parliament speech.

"The reason I used the idea of a grip and a choke is because these exist in Jiu-Jitsu and how you control an opponent in that sport. But they also exist in the political realm. And in my experience of politics, I have seen political grips and political chokes are mostly hidden. The average person cannot see them," he said.

"And you have to look carefully to see where the choke is being applied and where the grips are placed. So that was the idea behind using this. It expressed very powerfully what our prime minister is going through," he said.

The LoP said that on the

one hand is the criminal case against businessman Gautam Adani in the US and on the other hand is the Epstein scandal.

"Three million files not released. We all know that (Union minister) Hardeep Puri is involved in the files, we know Mr. Anil Ambani is involved in the files and we also know the prime minister's name appears and the PM is most likely involved in the files," he said.

On the other side, there is China, Gandhi said and referred to the unreleased book of former Army chief MM Naravane.

"So on one side there is the Chinese who are sitting on our border and on the other side there is the US. Our PM is torn between these grips. He is trapped, everybody knows it, everybody can see it. The problem is that the real grip on Mr Narendra Modi is the fake image that he has built, that has been built for him, an image that has required huge amounts of money," he said.

"The key to that image is now in the hands of the US and that is why Indian farmers are going to suffer, In-

dian textile is going to suffer, we will be forced to buy imports from the US.

"But most important is the data. The fact that our data is being handed over by Mr Narendra Modi to American companies, to the US, for a pittance. Mark my words, we are going to become a data colony. Why did a country of the size of India hand away everything, including our data, textile industry and our agriculture sector, for what and why? The answer is in the grips and chokes that are applied on the PM," Gandhi added.

The Congress has alleged that Modi has "surrendered" before US President Donald Trump in agreeing to the deal, which, it claimed, will "devastate" the livelihoods of crores of farmers across states and sacrifice India's energy security, digital sovereignty and economic self-reliance.

It said trade agreements should not become a path to slavery by "sacrificing a country's sovereignty", and asserted that national interest cannot be mortgaged under the guise of a trade pact. (Agencies)

NEW DELHI, FEB 20:

A group of Indian Youth Congress workers on Friday staged a dramatic 'shirtless protest' at an AI Impact Summit exhibition hall, walking around holding T-shirts with slogans against the government and the India-US trade deal printed on them, before being whisked away by security personnel.

A senior police officer said that around 10 people were detained when they were protesting at the AI Summit. "They were removed immediately and were taken to Tilak Marg police station. No one will be allowed to breach the law and order situation," the officer said.

The BJP slammed the Congress for its youth wing workers' protest, alleging that a "ruckus" was created at the venue to sabotage India's global image at the behest of former party chief Rahul Gandhi.

The protesters marched inside Exhibition Hall No 5, wearing or holding white T-shirts with images of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump printed on them, along with slogans such as "India-US Trade Deal", "Epstein Files" and "PM is compromised", soon resulting in a commotion.

The ensuing melee witnessed heated exchanges between some of the attendees of the mega event and a few protesters.

Posting a video of the protest, the Indian Youth Congress (IYC) said the question being asked is: Why exactly did young Congress



workers need to raise their voices against the "compromised PM inside the AI Summit." "In a country where the media, the system, and the prime minister himself have already been compromised, what platform remains to raise a voice against it? If we protest on the streets, we are stopped. Under the guise of IT Rules, social media posts against the government are taken down. The media has become the government's mouthpiece. So, what avenue remains open to us?" the Youth Congress asked.

"We are not against the AI Summit. We are against the compromises being made with India's interests. When the country's farmers are being bargained away, anti-India trade agreements are being signed, and the youth is kept unemployed while being dragged into politics of hate, should we stay silent?" it asked.

"This country belongs to 140 crore citizens. If we know how to walk the path shown by Mahatma Gandhi, we also know how to walk the path shown by Sardar Bhagat Singh. We will never allow the interests of the country's youths and farmers to be bargained away. Inquilab Zindabad," the IYC said in its post in Hindi.

A Delhi Police personnel on duty said they are going to heighten security inside the halls after the "unfortunate episode".

The protest, which lasted a few minutes before the group was bundled out of the hall, caught the guests and other visitors by surprise, many of whom watched the unfolding scenes in disbelief, given the significance of the AI Summit that India is hosting.

The AI Impact Summit is being held from February 16-20 at Bharat Mandapam, in which several heads of state,

global AI leaders, academicians and researchers, heads of global tech giants and philanthropists are taking part.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the AI Impact Summit 2026 here on Thursday in the presence of several world leaders and heads of global tech giants.

After being whisked away from the hall, the protesters marched towards the lobby, stood against a massive backdrop mounted there and shouted slogans against the government.

A student from Ludhiana who visited the Impact Arena at the summit on Friday said that when general visitors register through the summit website, a QR code comes in their email, which carries the name and identity of their organisation or institution. This QR code is used to enter the Bharat Mandapam premises, he said. (Agencies)