

Military Modernisation Driven By Self-Reliant, Future-Ready Defence Sector Govt's Top Priority: Rajnath

NEW DELHI, AUG 14: Military modernisation driven by a self-reliant and future-ready defence sector is the government's top priority, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said on Friday, highlighting the transformation of India's defence sector over the past 12 years.

Addressing soldiers through Akashvani on the eve of the 80th Independence Day, Singh said, "The Government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is according the highest priority to the modernisation of the defence forces driven by a self-reliant and future-ready defence sector."

Initiatives such as 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' have enabled India to cater to its own security needs while emerging as a global defence manufacturing hub and a net defence exporter.

Rajnath Singh emphasised that the domestic defence production, which stood at just Rs 46,000 crore in 2014, has skyrocketed to a record Rs 1.78 lakh crore in the Financial Year (FY) 2025-26, nearly a four-fold increase over the last decade. This achievement, he said, is a testament to the structural changes that have taken place in the defence sector.

He pointed out that Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) and other public sector entities accounted for approximately 76% of the total defence production, with the private sector contributing 24%, up from 22% in the previous fiscal year.

"This growing participation of the private sector signals a continuously improving business environment within the defence sector," he said.

The exports, which stood at a mere Rs 686 crore in FY 2013-14, surged to an all-time high of Rs 38,424 crore in FY 2025-26, an increase of over 5,500%. He described the feat as the most compelling evidence of Aatmanirbharta in the defence sector.

"Today, India has 145 defence exporters, and our products are being exported to over 80 countries. I am confident that we will achieve our defence exports target of Rs 50,000 crore by 2029," he said.

The Defence Minister said the defence budget has risen



from Rs 2.53 lakh crore in FY 2013-14 to Rs 7.85 lakh crore in FY 2026-27, which is a reflection of India's growing commitment to future defence technologies.

"Capital expenditure has grown from Rs 94,588 crore to Rs 2.19 lakh crore. Our focus on Research & Development has also intensified. The R&D budget, which stood at Rs 15,283 crore in FY 2014-15, has increased by 90% to Rs 29,100 crore in FY 2026-27," he said.

Singh added that over the past year, the Defence Acquisition Council has granted Acceptance of Necessity for projects worth over Rs 8.75 lakh crore, which highlights the Government's emphasis on defence modernisation. He listed the fundamental reforms undertaken in defence procurement to accelerate this modernisation process, including a two-fold increase in the financial ceiling for Field Commanders to strengthen operational efficiency, and facilitation of the procurement worth more than Rs 1.25 lakh crore through the revenue route to boost indigenisation.

He also acknowledged the enthusiastic participation of the defence forces in the journey towards Aatmanirbharta. He stressed that India's defence self-reliance drive is gaining momentum as indigenous warships, aircraft, and advanced military systems are strengthening the capabilities of the Defence Forces.

He asserted that DRDO and the defence forces are positioning India at the forefront of technologies for future warfare amidst the evolving defence landscape. He made special mention of the successful test of the first Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation system, which has the capability to transform conventional weapons into precision-guided munitions.

"The testing of the Ad-

vanced Agni Missile, equipped with MIRV technology, has added a new dimension to the strategic deterrence capabilities. Successful trials of the Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile, RudraM-II Air-to-Surface Missile, Naval Anti-Ship Missile-SR, and Pinaka Long-Range Guided Rocket have provided unprecedented strength to the nation's strike capabilities," he added.

On the successful test of the Active Cooled Full-Scale Scramjet Combustor for over 1,200 seconds, Rajnath Singh stated that the feat has placed India among the select group of nations capable of developing hypersonic missile technology. He added that the nation's air defence capabilities have been further bolstered by the first successful test of the indigenous Kusha Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile.

The minister underlined that border area development is a focus area of the government, as the objective is to enhance defence preparedness and connectivity with border areas. He lauded the defence forces for being the 'first responders' to carry out relief and rescue operations whenever an unfortunate natural disaster occurs in the country or abroad.

He reiterated the Government's commitment to the welfare of serving and retired defence forces personnel as well as their families, describing them as a reflection of honor, dignity, and self-respect. "Over the past five years, there has been a 300% increase in the budget of the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme. Furthermore, under the Armed Forces Flag Day Fund, the Penury Grant has been doubled from Rs 4,000 to Rs 8,000, the Education Grant from Rs 1,000 to Rs 2,000 and the Marriage Grant from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1,00,000. These decisions demonstrate

our commitment to the welfare of our soldiers and their Next-of-Kin," he said.

He also underscored the Government's continued focus on providing increased opportunities for women in the defence forces and effectively utilising Nari Shakti in national security & nation building. "We achieved a historic milestone when the first batch of female cadets trained at the National Defence Academy was commissioned as officers in the three Services. This is proof that courage and leadership are not confined to any gender. 'Samudra Pradakhshina', the first tri-service all-women circumnavigation sailing expedition onboard Indian Army Sailing Vessel Triveni, stands as a symbol of 'New India' powered by 'Nari Shakti', he said.

Singh emphasised that 79 years ago, India's freedom fighters such as Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Bhagat Singh, Chandrashekhar Azad, Sarojini Naidu, Rani Gaidinliu, and countless known and unknown heroes laid the foundation of independent India, and the responsibility of safeguarding the nation's sovereignty, unity, and integrity today rests on the Defence Forces. "Even in adverse circumstances, the steadfast resolve of our soldiers ensures that the citizens realise their dreams in a safe environment. Their courage, commitment, and discipline serve as a source of inspiration to every Indian. The nation will remain forever indebted to their unparalleled service, sacrifice, and dedication," he said, expressing gratitude to every soldier.

He stressed that the Independence Day this year holds special significance as 2026 marks the 150th anniversary of the National Song 'Vande Mataram'. "It is our collective responsibility to celebrate the occasion with great enthusiasm. It is not merely an anniversary, but a celebration of our collective consciousness. I am confident that this Independence Day will continue to fuel the spirit of patriotism and service to the nation within every citizen. Let us pledge to become active participants in nation-building and, by discharging our duties with dedication, make meaningful contributions towards building Viksit Bharat," he said while concluding his address.

PM, Shah Must Respond On Reports Of Chinese Aggression In Arunachal Pradesh, Loss Of Territory: Kharage

NEW DELHI, AUG 14: The Congress on Friday said Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah must tell the nation whether China has stopped Indian troops from patrolling in certain areas of Arunachal Pradesh.

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge said India firmly stands behind its soldiers and is united against any Chinese aggression, but the Modi government must respond to the reports.

"After Galwan, now Arunachal Pradesh? Disturbing reports suggest that China is attempting to push further into areas in Arunachal Pradesh, an inalienable part of our nation. This demands immediate answers from the Modi Government," Kharge said on X.

There has been no immediate reaction from the government on the claims and no official word on any such development in Arunachal Pradesh.

"Let us not forget that after 20 of our brave soldiers made the supreme sacrifice in Galwan in 2020, none less than PM Modi gave China a 'CLEAN CHIT', emboldening their transgressions! That record inspires no confidence," the Congress chief said, citing the violent clashes between India-China troops in 2020 in Galwan.

"The Prime Minister, Defence Minister and Home Minister must answer the nation. "We have complete faith in the courage and capability of the Indian Armed Forces. India stands firmly behind our soldiers and united against any Chinese aggression," Kharge said.

He also asked whether the PLA, the Chinese as it is known, had expanded its presence near Taksing and whether India had lost regular access to Shera-5, a designated Patrolling Point.

"Why is Indian patrolling reportedly limited during winter in this sensitive sector while the PLA maintains a year round presence? Why are traditional grazing and hunting grounds becoming inaccessible to local communities?"

"Has the pre-May 2020 status quo ante in Eastern Ladakh been fully restored? The BJP is culpable in hiding facts about situation on the ground and taking Parliament into confidence whether India retains full access to all areas and Patrolling Points it accessed prior to May 2020," the



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Serious Doubts On Intent: Cong Attacks Government On Caste Census Issue

NEW DELHI, AUG 14: The Congress on Friday attacked the government over the caste census issue, saying that not carrying a list of castes with responses recorded as shared by respondents raises "serious doubts on intent".

Congress general secretary in-charge communications Jairam Ramesh said it had been widely expected that the caste question will be asked with a pre-prepared state-wise list as had been done in the Bihar and Telangana caste surveys with the response being just ticked appropriately.

"This has, unfortunately, not happened, raising serious doubts on intent," Ramesh said on X.

The Centre on Friday notified 40 questions with caste, place of Covid vaccination being two of them to be asked of respondents during the population enumeration phase of the Census, set to begin from September 1 in snow-bound areas, a government order said.

The order from Registrar General of India Mrityunjay Kumar Narayan notifies questions such as whether the person belongs to a Scheduled Caste or a Scheduled Tribe and their caste. Geographic Reference The population enumera-



tion in Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, will take place from September 1 to 30, according to a gazette notification issued earlier this month.

the conduct of the above Census, there shall be an option for self-enumeration from August 17 to 31 just before the start of house-to-house population enumeration," it said.

In the rest of the country, the population enumeration (PE) will begin next year.

This will be the first time when caste details will be collected as part of the Census.

The questionnaire is unlikely to carry a list of castes, and the responses will be recorded as shared by respondents, sources said.

The decision to include

caste enumeration was taken by the Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on April 30 last year.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by sub-section (1) of section 8 of the Census Act, 1948 (Act 37 of 1948), the Central Government hereby instructs and directs that the census officers may, within the limits of the local area for which they have been respectively appointed, ask all such questions of all persons residing within such limits, subject to the items enumerated below, for collecting information through the Household Schedule in connection with the Census of India 2027," a notification from Registrar General of India said.

The respondents will be asked for personal details, such as marital status, age at

leader of opposition in Rajya Sabha asked.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi had on Thursday alleged that China has stopped Indian troops from patrolling in certain areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in Arunachal Pradesh and that the government was making efforts to "hide it." Geographic Refer-

ence The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) on Tuesday said that India considers matters relating to border areas with China as "most serious" and asserted that maintaining peace and tranquillity along the LAC is of "utmost importance", as the state of the frontier will govern the overall trajectory of bilateral ties.

The MEA's remarks came amid reports of aggressive posturing by Chinese troops in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Subansiri region.

China on Wednesday said the situation along the Sino-India border is "generally stable at the moment" while declining to comment on reports of stepped-up Chinese military activity near the Arunachal Pradesh border. (PTI)

marriage, spouse name, nationality, religion, Scheduled Caste (SC)/Scheduled Tribe (ST), caste, particulars of parents, disability, mother tongue, and other languages known, literacy, and digital literacy status, among others.

The biggest head count of the world will be a totally digital enterprise.

Respondents will also be asked for attendance in an educational institution, highest educational level, stream, discipline, if they worked at any time during the last year, category of economic activity, occupation, nature of industry, trade or service, class of worker and if engaged in non-economic activity (for marginal, semi-marginal and non-worker).

Whether they are available for work (for marginal, semi-marginal and non-worker) and if they travel to their place of work will also be part of the questionnaire.

The enumerators will also ask for the birthplace of respondents, place of last residence, reason for migration, duration of stay in this village/town since last migration, and permanent residential address, it said.

The first phase -- house listing and housing census (HLO) -- is on till September 30. (Agencies)

SC Slams BCI's Move Against NALSAR Students, Says They Have Right To Protest

NEW DELHI, AUG 14: "It's a dialogue between students and me," Chief Justice of India Surya Kant said on Friday as he sharply pulled up the Bar Council of India for its order that the 2026 graduates of Hyderabad's NALSAR University of Law not be enrolled as advocates following their objections to his proposed campus visit.

Students have a right to protest, the CJI-led bench said a day after the BCI directed all state bar councils not to enrol any 2026 graduate of the university until further orders. The order was reversed within hours after an uproar on social media.

"It's a dialogue between students and me. Who are they (BCI) to interfere? This is totally uncalled for," the chief justice said after a plea challenging the BCI's circular was mentioned before it for urgent hearing.

"I myself, in my student days, was actively involved in student activities," he

said. The bench, also including Justices Joymalya Bagchi and V Mohana, asked NALSAR to tell its students to get enrolled as advocates at the earliest and said, "We will empanel them for legal aid cases."

A section of students of the premier law institute had written to the vice chancellor, registrar and professors of the institution, opposing any proposal to invite the CJI as chief guest to the varsity's convocation, the date of which is yet to be announced.

Assuming even if they (students) are wrong, they have a right to protest. BCI does not have any business in this," the bench said, terming the BCI's action "absolutely unnecessary".

Observing that students have the right to protest peacefully and nobody can stop them from doing so, the apex court asked the BCI's counsel whether a meeting of the council was convened

to take a resolution like that.

The matter was posted for hearing after two weeks.

The court has issued notice to the BCI, seeking its response within two weeks on the plea challenging the circular issued by the apex bar body.

"Issue notice. In the meanwhile, no punitive action shall be taken against the students or faculty of the NALSAR University of Law at the instance of the BCI or any state bar council," the bench said.

The counsel appearing for the BCI told the bench that the circular has been withdrawn. Senior advocate K Parameshwar, who mentioned the matter, told the bench that the BCI had issued orders taking action against the students of NALSAR. A BCI member from Kerala has opposed such a circular being issued.

In the first circular, BCI chairperson Manan Kumar Mishra said it was examin-

ing allegations regarding a campaign against CJI Kant's participation in the university's convocation and had sought a report identifying those responsible.

The apex statutory body for lawyers said a final decision in the matter would be taken on August 19 after considering the material placed before it.

The BCI then modified its decision after the uproar on social media and allowed state bar councils to enrol 2026 graduates of NALSAR University of Law as advocates.

The new notification modified the earlier order, saying the "vast majority" of the students were innocent and should not be made to suffer for the alleged misconduct of a few. Mishra said in the fresh communication that members had thoroughly discussed the earlier letter issued and unanimously decided to modify the direction concerning the enrolment of the students.

Uttarakhand: 7 Dead In Tunnel Tragedy In Chamoli; Search On For 3 Missing

GOPESHWAR (UTTARAKHAND), AUG 14: Seven workers died when water gushed inside a tunnel under construction at a hydroelectric project site in Chamoli district, officials said on Friday.

Search for three missing persons is currently underway, they said.

The incident occurred in a tunnel at Mayapur (Pipalkoti), when landslides and subsidence caused debris and water to fill half of the tunnel, trapping workers inside.

District Disaster Management Officer N K Joshi said 22 people were inside the

tunnel at the time of the incident on Thursday.

Of them, 19 were rescued overnight, seven died, and a search for the three missing is on, he said.

According to a statement, the deceased were identified as Pradeep Singh Pawar of Tehri, Mukesh of Chamoli, Durlabh Sharma of Bihar, Vijay Hansda and Jitendra Kumar of Jharkhand, and Lokeshwar and Bhuneshwar, whose native place could not yet be ascertained.

The missing have been identified as Lucas Topno from Jharkhand, and Chetan Poyam and Devnath from Chhattisgarh.

According to a report, 10 of the injured are being treated at the District Hospital in Gopeshwar, one has been admitted to the Base Hospital in Srinagar, while another was discharged after treatment. City & Local Guides

Six rescue personnel entered the tunnel, which is still filled with water.

The National Disaster Response Force (NDRF), State Disaster Response Force (SDRF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), and the police are carrying out the rescue.

Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami landed at Pipalkoti in a helicopter to

oversee operations.

District Magistrate Gaurav Kumar, who was at the site, has called for marshalling all resources needed to locate the missing persons.

The tunnel construction is a part of the Tehri Hydro Development Corporation's Vishnugad-Pipalkoti Hydroelectric Project.

On November 12, 2023, a portion of the under-construction Silkyara-Barkot tunnel in Uttarkashi district collapsed, trapping 41 workers.

All of them were rescued in a multi-agency rescue operation that lasted 17 days. (PTI)