India committed to collective regional security & eradication of terrorism, ready to share battle-tested expertise with ADMM-Plus partners to strengthen joint capabilities: Raksha Mantri

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Op Sindoor decisively demonstrated India’s proactive, battle-tested doctrine, says Shri Rajnath Singh

“India’s emphasis on the rule of law and freedom of navigation & overflight not directed against any country; it is meant to safeguard collective interests of regional stakeholders”

RM proposes establishment of a defence ‘Youth Bridge’ to boost India-ASEAN connectivity, digital innovation and capacity building

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Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh has reaffirmed India’s commitment to collective regional security and the eradication of terrorism in all its forms, emphasising that New Delhi’s extensive expertise in counter-terrorism is not theoretical classroom knowledge; it is an experience hard-earned on the ground through decades of directly confronting complex, cross-border security challenges. Addressing the 13th ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting (ADMM) - Plus in Cebu, Philippines on October 29, 2026, he asserted that every strategy of India has been tested, refined, and proven in the crucible of real-world operations. He added that this proactive, battle-tested doctrine was decisively demonstrated during Operation Sindoor, when India dismantled terrorist infrastructure and enforced a non-negotiable red line against state-sponsored terror.

Raksha Mantri underlined that terrorism knows no borders and India stands fully prepared to share its practical, battle-tested experience with ADMM-Plus partners through joint exercises, capacity-building programmes, and robust intelligence sharing to strengthen collective capabilities. He stressed that counter-terrorism remains an important area of cooperation under the ADMM-Plus framework, and India & Malaysia are co-chairing the Experts' Working Group on Counter-Terrorism for the 2024 to 2027 cycle.

Shri Rajnath Singh reiterated that India attaches importance to ASEAN centrality and a secure, open, inclusive, resilient and rule-based Indo-Pacific, where peace & stability are not just aspirations but a result of collective commitment. He stated that its strategic engagement with ASEAN is long-term and rooted in shared interests, mutual respect and practical cooperation. He recalled that the second ASEAN-India Defence Ministers' Informal Meeting in Kuala Lumpur in October last year reaffirmed the commitment to advancing the defence and security components of the ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and the ASEAN-India Plan of Action for 2026 to 2030.

On the theme of 13th ADMM-Plus *'Navigating Our Future, Together'*, Raksha Mantri stated that it resonates with India's foreign and defence policy paradigms as well as its civilisational ethos of '*Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah*' (May all beings be happy) that reflects the aspiration for the happiness, prosperity, and well-being of all the people across the world. "This theme reminds us that our greatest strength lies in our solidarity and the shared ability to leverage our geographic, economic and strategic diversity. India believes in an international system built on mutual trust, co-operation, and collective responsibility. It is this precise collaborative spirit that empowers us to overcome the challenges to peace and order," he said.

Shri Rajnath Singh described maritime cooperation as crucial to India's engagement with ASEAN during 2026, highlighting New Delhi's designation of 2026 as the ASEAN-India Year of Maritime Cooperation and the conduct of the second ASEAN-India Maritime Exercise. He emphasised that India does not merely preach the tenets of international maritime law; it is a steadfast practitioner of global laws concerning maritime security. "Our commitment to ensuring the freedom of navigation and safeguarding global Sea Lines of Communication is backed by a continuous, decades-long operational legacy. Since 2008, the Indian Navy has maintained an uninterrupted, active presence in highly volatile corridors like the Gulf of Aden, without coercion or unilateral actions that undermine the rights of other nations," he said.

Raksha Mantri highlighted that by deploying frontline warships, India has successfully escorted thousands of merchant vessels and thwarted dozens of high-seas hijackings, extending protection to commercial shipping irrespective of flag or nationality. He termed the security of commercial shipping as India's responsibility. "In an era where global trade routes face complex transnational threats, India stands ready to move beyond rhetoric. There is a need for effective action, regular operational presence and international cooperation. India will continue serving as a reliable net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region and the wider Indo-Pacific," he said.

Underlining that maritime security is closely connected with the safety and prosperity of the wider region, Shri Rajnath Singh said India's emphasis on the rule of law, particularly the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and its advocacy for freedom of

navigation and overflight are not directed against any country but are meant to safeguard the collective interests of all regional stakeholders who depend on open sea lanes and stable maritime governance. He stated that India gives due respect to maritime safety, search & rescue, humanitarian assistance, professional interaction, capacity building and international law, and India remains ready to work with ASEAN partners in strengthening cooperation in these areas.

Raksha Mantri highlighted the importance of youth engagement in strengthening India-ASEAN defence cooperation, stating that the shared demographic profile and aspirations of the young populations provide a strong foundation for deeper regional partnership. He proposed the establishment of a dedicated defence 'Youth Bridge' to enhance institutional people-to-people connectivity, promote digital innovation and facilitate capacity building in line with ADMM-Plus initiatives. He stated that empowering youth and providing them with greater opportunities to contribute to regional peace and security is consistent with the theme of 'Youth, Peace and Security' and is essential for building a peaceful, resilient and prosperous Indo-Pacific.

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