

Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh reaffirms India's firm resolve to tackle cross-border terrorism;

Calls upon SAARC nations to be united in defeating the menace

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Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh has said India is fully capable of giving a firm response to cross-border terrorism, and strikes against terrorist attacks in 2016 and 2019 have demonstrated the nation's firm resolve to defeat terrorism. Addressing the inaugural session of 12th South Asian Conference at Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis here today, Shri Singh reiterated the government's stand that talks and terror cannot go together and asked Pakistan to take demonstrable steps against terror groups responsible for launching various attacks on India from its soil.

Raksha Mantri said that India was engaged in conversations with its neighbour in order to develop joint approaches for regional peace and security. He called upon the member countries of the regional outfit SAARC or South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation to be united in efforts to defeat terrorism. Shri Rajnath Singh said that with the exception of Pakistan, the SAARC countries have adhered to the principles of non-interference in each other's internal affairs and not supporting cross-border terrorism.

Without naming any country, Raksha Mantri said that full potential of SAARC has not been realized due to the behaviour and policies of a single country and cited how the SAARC motor vehicles agreement was stalled at the last Kathmandu session in 2015. He further said that the same country has preferred to use terrorism as a state policy towards India, rather than peaceful settlement of disputes through dialogue. Shri Rajnath Singh said, use of terror as an instrument of its foreign and security policy has promoted radicalism and terrorism in the region and posed critical challenges to security of all states. He said that the Easter Bomb attacks in April 2019 were the latest instance of how dangerous such a policy has been for the region and beyond. He stressed that the terror attacks in Mumbai, Pathankot, Uri and Pulwama in India were grim reminders of state-sponsored terrorism by a neighbouring country. Shri Rajnath Singh said that as the largest country in the region, India has always made efforts to share its prosperity with its neighbourhood. Explaining the essential contours of the Government's Neighbourhood First Policy or NFP, he said that the mutually beneficial and broad-based approach, comprising both the components of development and security, was inclusive and sensitive to the priorities of the neighbouring countries. He said that the Government has recognised the neighbourhood as the most important foreign policy priority.

Stressing the need of the regional unity and cooperation, Shri Rajnath Singh said that India has always harboured the cultural ethos of brotherhood and the traditional knowledge through Vedas, Upanishad has and Puranas have taught the country the strength of unity. He added that the Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has a firm belief in the principle of Sabka Sath Sabka Vikas and it will bring win-win situation for all.

Informing that the Government has committed about 13.14 billion US dollars in credit-lines and about 4 billion US dollars in assistance in the neighbourhood over the last decade, Raksha Mantri said that India is willing to play a leading and critical role at the development front under NFP, by making resources available to the neighbours to build necessary infrastructure that will enable connectivity and easy flow of region-wide movement of goods, services, people and ideas.

Stating that South Asia is at a critical juncture of history where a world of opportunity is beckoning, Shri Rajnath Singh said that regional prosperity should not be held hostage to the interests of select states who are obstructing all efforts aimed at regional cooperation. He said that intra-regional trade has so far been abysmally low, and underlined the need to transcend the limitations.

Talking about the conference and the organisers, Raksha Mantri said that such events by the civil society can influence governments through their proactive efforts adding that regional civil society of South Asia has a duty to encourage efforts like this. He also called upon the civil society of the region to help create a culture of cooperation in the region.

The IDSA Director General Ambassador Shri Sujan R Chinoy and other senior military & civil officials of the Ministry of Defence were also present on the occasion.

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