

International

India should market its defence technologies'

NEW DELHI, Oct 10: Country's top defence scientist APJ Abdul Kalam on Friday advocated aggressive marketing of India's frontline defence technologies like missiles, guns and battle tanks to get its due share of the whapping global market, reports AFP.

Making case for export of defence systems such as Main Battle Tank (MBT), missiles not covered by Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), guns, light combat aircraft and nuclear power stations, Kalam said this was needed to reach a developed country status.

Speaking at the first PNS Haksar memorial lecture on 'developed Nation: The vision', he said India was on the threshold of expansion of aerospace, advanced electronics, advanced sensors and materials industry and should operate them in a market-driven environment to win its share of global market.

Kalam said India's thrust for self-reliance should be coupled with global marketing to overcome what he called pressure which "the developed world may force upon us."

He said this had become the focus of Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) so that the self-reliance mission of realising 70 per cent indigenous defence systems by 2005 as compared to the present 30 per cent was achieved.

Referring to the Pokhran-II and recent successful testing of Agni-II missile, Kalam said these successful missions were marks of nation's triumph for self-reliance despite technology denial.

Last year's nuclear explosion was also an example of a great partnership between Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and DRDO which helped the country achieve self-reliance in these strategic sectors, he said.

Mubarak approves new cabinet

CAIRO, Oct 10: Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak has approved a new cabinet with 12 fresh faces although key ministers like foreign affairs and economics have been left in old hands, officials said Sunday, reports AFP.

But Mubarak was still to officially announce the 32-member line-up after his new Prime Minister Atef Ebeid meets later Sunday with his cabinet members, the officials said.

The cabinet will then meet with Mubarak when they will be sworn into office.

Those keeping their jobs are Defence Minister Hussein Tantawi, Foreign Minister Amr Mussa, Interior Minister Habib al-Adli, Economy Minister Yusuf Butros-Ghali and Information Minister Saifat al-Sherif.

Yusuf Wal also stayed on as deputy prime minister and minister of agriculture.

Ali Eddine Helal, who was dean of the faculty of political sciences at Cairo University, was appointed to head a new youth ministry.

Maher Abaza and Hamdi al-Banbi, who were respectively the ministers of electricity and oil in the previous government of prime minister Kamal al-Ganzuri, were replaced by Ali al-Saidi and Sameh Fahmi.

At the finance ministry, Medhat Hassanein, replaces Mohieddin al-Gharib.

Newcomer Mustafa al-Rifai was given the industry portfolio renamed technological development and industry "to underline the importance that the government gives to modernising the country and entering a new era," an official said.

The job was previously held by Suleiman Reda.

The transportation and communications ministry was divided into two separate ministries, with Ibrahim al-Dumeiri being given transportation and Ahmed Nazif communications.

Voting opens in Berlin poll

BERLIN, Oct 10: Voting opened Sunday in Berlin, the German capital and one of the country's 16 states, in a poll expected to be yet another in a string of humiliating electoral defeats for Social Democrat (SPD) Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, reports AFP.

Poll say the opposition conservative Christian Democrats (CDU) will win the Berlin state vote, which opened at 1200 BST.

Television exit poll estimates of results were expected almost instantaneously after the polling stations closed at 2200 GMT.

The CDU may emerge with an absolute majority in the Berlin state parliament after governing for the past four years in a coalition with the SPD, according to an Infrasat Dimap poll released last Sunday.

The poll put the Christian Democrats' support at 45 per cent compared to only 21 per cent for the Social Democrats, below the SPD's already disastrous score of 23.6 per cent in 1995, a post-war low for them in a Berlin vote.

Even the Christian Democrats, who scored 37.5 per cent in 1995, still need the SPD to form a government, the conservatives are almost certain to remain the dominant party, with their candidate Eberhard Diepgen, 57, staying in office.

Schroeder's centre-left government is now almost as unpopular as that of his conservative predecessor, Helmut Kohl, at the end of his 16-year stretch as Germany's leader, an opinion poll indicated last week.

Armed encounters with peacekeepers

Militiaman shot dead in E Timor

DILI, East Timor, Oct 10: Interfet troops shot dead a militiaman and possibly hit two others in separate encounters along the tense western border at a place called Alto Lebas, to the north of the town of Suai.

Kelly said the militiaman had posed a clear threat to the Interfet patrol.

It was at the last safe moment with the fire coming towards them, (at) their observation post ... they (the patrol) engaged (them) by fire.

After the clash the militiamen withdrew towards the border region, but the dead man's body had been recovered, and there was nothing on the corpse to indicate that he had anything to do with the Indonesian army.

In Sunday's shootout near the border town of Motaela, Interfet troops firing in self-defence, said two militiamen may have been hit. The encounters were the first since last Monday, when two militiamen were killed and two Australian soldiers seriously wounded near Suai.

The militias have warned in Indonesian-ruled West Timor they have up to 12,000 men ready to engage Interfet and they are digging in for a guerrilla war.

Australian Prime Minister John Howard warned Saturday confrontations between the Australian-led Interfet and the militia could mount.

"I've said it before and I'll say it again today, this is a dangerous mission," Howard said. "So far we have been spared the awful trauma of heavy casualties but we can't ... lose sight of the possibility that things could turn nasty."

Polls in India

CPI (M)-led left front manages to keep vote percentage intact

CALCUTTA, Oct 10: Despite conceding five seats to the Trinamool Congress-BJP combine, the CPI (M)-led ruling left front was able to keep its overall vote percentage intact in West Bengal, reports AFP.

Referring to the Pokhran-II and recent successful testing of Agni-II missile, Kalam said these successful missions were marks of nation's triumph for self-reliance despite technology denial.

Last year's nuclear explosion was also an example of a great partnership between Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and DRDO which helped the country achieve self-reliance in these strategic sectors, he said.

The votes of the CPI (M)-led ruling left front were retained in the Congress, which fared better in some areas of North Bengal and pulled off a spectacular victory at Berhampore, on the other hand, dropped by two per cent and helped the TC-BJP alliance to wrest three seats from the CPI-M.

Congress bagged 13.29 per cent votes compared to 15.20 in 1998 election.

A cursory glance at the poll statistics indicated that in both Contai and Nabadwip, the two seats which the Trinamool Congress wrested from the Marxists, there was erosion in Congress voteshare.

Congress candidate Ajit Khanra got just 34,070 votes against 1,10,249 polled by the party in the last election while in Nabadwip the party nominee Shambhu Sekhar Biswas bagged 1,08,464 votes compared to 1,76,485 votes.

In both these constituencies the voteshare of the CPI-M also marginally dropped by just one per cent.

But overall the left front maintained its vote percentage as it got 46.76 per cent votes against 46.82 per cent secured in 1998 election.

The front conceded three seats to TC-BJP primarily due to fall in the percentage of

Congress votes. What is worrying the Marxists is the inroad made by the combine into the industrial and rural belts considered to be its stronghold.

Results indicated that the combine not only retained their support base in the metropolis and its adjoining areas but penetrated deep into the rural areas, so long the eldorado of left votes, as well as in the industrial belts.

Trinamool Congress which increased its vote share from 24.43 to 26.06 by contesting 28 seats made a clean sweep in the city, winning all the three seats and won Nabadwip and Contai, considered as rural segments, also on the trot.

Besides, the party retained Serampore, an industrial area and put up a spirited performance at Barrackpur, another industrial belt, by securing over 43 per cent votes against 48.06 per cent bagged by CPI-M candidate Tarit Barai Topdar who captured the seat.

Apart from this, TC candidate from Howrah, once dubbed as 'Sheffield of India', got 39.44 per cent votes, although the seat went to the CPI (M) this time.

Another important feature was the BJP doubling its strength in the state by securing 11.24 per cent votes compared to 10.20 per cent in 1998. BJP had contested 13 of the 42 seats as polls ally of the Trinamool Congress and captured two seats.

State BJP President Tapan

Sikdar who pulled off a surprise victory in Dum Dum in the last election by a decisive margin of 1.37 lakh votes retained the seat almost by the same margin despite vigorous campaigning by the CPI-M.

Sikdar secured more than 50 per cent votes and took lead in all the seven assembly segments. This was despite the fact that Chief Minister Jyoti Basu and many top CPI-M leaders had expressed confidence before the election that the party will regain Dum Dum from the BJP.

BJP scored another victory in Krishnagar in Nadia district, from where CPI-M state secretary and party's politburo member Anil Biswas hailed. Nabadwip, the other seat in the district was captured by TC.

Although the combine won ten seats compared to eight in the last poll, its candidates finished second in as many as 25 constituencies securing votes ranging from 31 per cent to 46 per cent.

Left front, on the other hand, which captured 29 seats came second in 10 constituencies.

Even as the Congress has faltered its fortune to some extent in some pockets of North Bengal, in most of the 42 constituencies party candidates finished third.

State Congress President ABA Ghani Khan Chowdhury retained the Malda seat by a reduced margin and WBPCC working President P R Dasgupta wrested the Raiganj seat from CPI-M.

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