

Amid threat from expansionist China, India & US to jointly produce Stryker fighting vehicles

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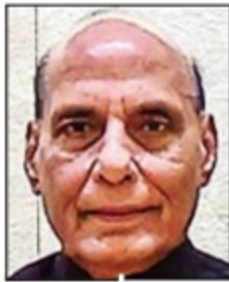
New Delhi: India and the US agree on the need to counter China's aggressive behaviour in Indo-Pacific region, defence minister **Rajnath Singh** said on Friday, even as the two countries decided to jointly produce Stryker armoured fighting vehicles as part of their expanding defence-industrial collaboration.

China's expansionist muscle-flexing loomed large during the 2+2 dialogue between India and US, with both reiterating the shared aim to keep the critical Indo-Pacific open

& free from coercion, though Beijing was not explicitly named in the joint statement.

Singh was forthright in the meeting with his US counterpart Lloyd Austin in the backdrop of festering military confrontation with China in eastern Ladakh, which has entered the fourth consecutive winter. "India-US defence relationship has evolved into a strategic partnership characterised by mutual trust, shared values and a growing recognition of common interests in maintaining regional & global security," Singh said.

"We increasingly find



ourselves in agreement on strategic issues, including countering China's aggression, promoting a free and open Indo-Pacific, and addressing regional security challenges," Singh added.

With an eye firmly on China's expanding naval presence in Indian Ocean, New Delhi and Washington resolved to further bolster maritime security, maritime domain awareness and interoperability between their militaries.

On the defence-industrial front, the two countries will now discuss the joint manufacture of the eight-wheeled Stryker infantry combat vehicles, which combine firepow-

er with rapid mobility on the battlefield and are being supplied by US to Ukraine in its ongoing conflict with Russia.

Under the bilateral defence-industrial cooperation roadmap finalised in June to fast-track technology collaboration and co-production, the other proposed projects range from air combat and ISR (intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance) systems to long-range artillery and smart munitions.

The two countries are also close to inking the Security of Supply Arrangement, identified as priority in the roadmap to further integrate defence-industrial ecosystems.