

India, France stress on synergy at AI Roundtable on sidelines of summit

PARIS, Feb 11 (IANS)

THE second India-France AI Policy Roundtable held on the sidelines of AI Action Summit 2025 stressed the potential for India and France to synergise on various policy positions and technological initiatives, fostering benefits not only at the bilateral level but also on a global scale by leveraging complementary knowledge and skill sets.

The roundtable discussion started with opening remarks by India's Principal Scientific Adviser (PSA) Ajay Kumar Sood where he highlighted India's priorities in global AI policy and governance, including responsible AI development and deployment, equitable benefit sharing, adoption of a techno-legal framework for AI governance, interoperable data flows, and collab-

oration on AI safety, research, and innovation.

Amita Shukla, Joint Secretary, Cyber Diplomacy Division, Ministry of External Affairs and Henri Verdier, Ambassador for Digital Affairs, French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs gave co-chairs remarks highlighting DPI for AI, global AI governance, AI foundation models and priority areas, such as integrating AI in addressing global challenges. They also mentioned cross-border data flows lacking arbitration mechanisms and the importance of aligned views on data sovereignty.

Speakers at the roundtable emphasised the need for democratised access to AI resources, and capacity building while recognising the importance of techno-legal frameworks.

The participants highlighted

the significance of sovereign AI models, ethical AI deployment and the need to define globally accepted terminologies and standards. They also aligned on multilingual LLMs, federated AI compute infrastructure, and interoperable access to AI research, datasets, and high-performance computing resources. Besides, the meeting covered key discussions on collaboration between India and France. Opportunities mentioned included creating indigenous foundation models and adopting a balanced governance approach to minimize risks while fostering innovation. Sustainable AI and energy-efficient computing were highlighted, alongside the importance of cross-border cooperation in AI research, datasets, and startups.

Military exercise between India, Egypt begins in Rajasthan

■ In this exercise, tactical drills for anti-terrorism operations in desert and semi-desert areas will be practised and validated.

JAIPUR, Feb 11 (PTI)

AN ALMOST fortnight-long joint military exercise between Indian and Egyptian armies began at Mahajan Field Firing Range here, a military spokesperson on Tuesday said.

Colonel Amitabh Sharma said that the third edition of the exercise 'Cyclone' of Special Forces of the two countries will conclude on February 23.

The exercise is an annual event, held alternately between India and Egypt. The last edition of the

exercise was held in Egypt in January 2024, he said.

According to a statement, the exercise will include 25 members each from two battalions of Special Forces from the Indian and Egyptian military contingent.

The aim of the exercise is to promote military relations between the two countries by increasing mutual exchange of special warfare operations tactics. It will focus on high-level physical fitness, joint planning and tactical exercises.

In this exercise, tactical drills for anti-terrorism operations in desert and semi-desert areas will be practised and validated. It will also include a demonstration of indigenous military equipment and an overview of Egypt's defence manufacturing industry, the statement read.

'Review of Chinese investment ban in India unlikely anytime soon'

MUMBAI, Feb 11 (PTI)

A REVIEW of the nearly five-year old restrictions on Chinese investments into India is unlikely in the near future, a senior official said on Tuesday.

Chief Economic Advisor V Anantha Nageswaran said both countries have to understand the importance of mutual dependence and mutual benefits.

"I don't think it is something you would expect to see immediate results because both sides are crossing the river by feeling the stones, so to speak," Nageswaran said, replying to a specific question on whether any changes are afoot.

It can be noted that following violent clashes between Indian and Chinese soldiers in Galwan valley in 2020, the Indian government introduced measures restricting investments from countries sharing a land border with India that was taken to be an attempt to restrict Chinese play. Speaking at the IVCA event here, Nageswaran did acknowledge that both countries have been engaged in a conversation on the trade imbalances, prob-

ably drawing from the parleys on various issues lately.

"We triggered a conversation because we basically wanted to highlight the fact that our bilateral trade deficit with China in 2024 might be close to USD 93-95 billion. And India is one of the top-3 countries with a huge trade imbalance with China. Naturally, if you are excessively import-dependent, it raises certain vulnerabilities in terms of supply chain," he said.

"But the question is: when it comes to investing in India, whether China also sees it as a mutual win-win is also a question we need to answer," Nageswaran added.

Speaking at the same event later, Renuka Ramnath of Multiple Alternate Asset Management said the private equity fund managed by her had to "leave hundreds of million dollars away" because of stipulations.

Noted corporate lawyer Zia Mody also went public with her concern on the issue and specifically highlighted the restrictions imposed on general partners as well as being a big difficulty.

PM Modi outlines India's ambitious energy roadmap for next 5 years

■ India by 2030 aims to add 500 GW of renewable energy capacity and to produce 5 million metric tonnes of green hydrogen annually



NEW DELHI, Feb 11 (ANI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi virtually inaugurated and addressed the India Energy Week 2025 on Tuesday, outlining India's ambitious energy roadmap and asserting that the next two decades will be crucial for the country's growth.

The Prime Minister said, "The coming two decades are extremely crucial for India, and in the next five years, we are set to achieve several major milestones. Many of our goals are aligned with the 2030 deadline. By 2030, we aim to add 500 GW of renewable energy capacity." He added, "The Indian Railways has set a Net Zero carbon emission target for 2030. Additionally, our goal is to

Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivers his remarks via video conferencing during inauguration of India Energy Week. (PTI)

produce 5 million metric tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030." India has emerged as the third-largest solar power generating nation globally, with its non-fossil fuel energy capacity tripling over the years.

PM Modi emphasised, "Today, India is the third-largest solar power generating nation in the world. Our non-fossil fuel energy capacity has tripled. Currently, India has achieved 19 per cent ethanol blending, and we are on track to implement a 20 per cent ethanol mandate before October

2025." PM Modi also emphasised the rapid growth of India's bio-fuel industry, supported by a sustainable feedstock of 500 million metric tons.

He highlighted, "India's bio-fuel industry is poised for rapid growth, backed by a sustainable feedstock of 500 million metric tonnes. During India's G20 presidency, the Global Biofuel Alliance was established and continues to expand. So far, 28 nations and 12 international organizations have joined this initiative, which is transforming waste into wealth and setting up centres of excellence."

"India is continuously implementing reforms to fully explore the potential of its hydrocarbon resources. Due to major discoveries and the rapid expansion of gas infrastructure, India's natural gas sector is growing significantly, increasing its share in the country's energy mix. Currently, India is the 4th largest refining hub in the world, and efforts are underway to expand refining capacity by 20 per cent," PM said.

EAM meets French counterpart Barrot

PARIS, Feb 11 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has met his French counterpart Jean-Noel Barrot here and the leaders discussed wide-ranging cooperation between both countries with a focus on AI, innovation and also on regional and global developments.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is on a three-day visit to France. He will co-chair the AI Action Summit with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris.

Modi will also hold bilateral talks with Macron, and address business leaders.

"A pleasure meeting FM @jnbarrot in Paris this evening. Discussed our wide-ranging cooperation with a focus on AI & innovation, connectivity and clean energy. Also spoke about regional and global develop-



EAM S Jaishankar meets Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France Jean-Noel Barrot in Paris. (PTI)

ments," Jaishankar posted on X on Monday. "Our strong convergence reflects the strength and comfort of our Strategic Partnership," the post said.

Meanwhile, Barrot said that in 2026, France and India will write together a "year of innovation".

"With India, AI is the new frontier of our strategic partnership. In 2026, we will write together a Franco-Indian year of innovation!" Barrot posted on X.

Modi received a grand diaspora welcome as he landed in Paris on Monday. "A memorable welcome in Paris! The cold weather didn't deter the Indian community from showing their affection this evening. Grateful to our diaspora and proud of them for their accomplishments," he said.

Modi and Macron will also inaugurate the newest Consulate General of India in Marseille.

This is Modi's sixth visit to France, according to officials.

Ukraine, Russia trade long-range attacks

KYIV, Feb 11 (AP)

RUSSIAN forces targeted Ukraine's energy and gas infrastructure in a "massive" nighttime missile attack and Ukrainian drones struck an important oil refinery inside Russia, officials said on Tuesday, as the near three-year war rumbled on against the backdrop of renewed diplomatic efforts to end it.

Ukraine's state energy company, Ukrenergo, said it imposed emergency blackouts due to the Russian attack. Russia has repeatedly hammered Ukraine's power grid throughout the war.

Meanwhile, as part of its long-range drone campaign against targets deep inside Russia, Ukraine hit a refinery in Russia's Saratov region about 500 kilometres from Ukraine's border, the Army General Staff claimed. The facility produces gasoline, fuel oil and diesel fuel for the Russian military, it said.

International efforts are afoot to stop the fighting, with President Donald Trump's senior advisors expected to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy later this week on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference to

discuss a path toward ending the war.

Vice President JD Vance, Secretary of State Marco Rubio and retired Lt Gen Keith Kellogg, Trump's special envoy to Ukraine and Russia, are among the US administration officials travelling to Germany for the summit.

Zelenskyy said late on Monday that Trump's representatives will visit Ukraine this week, ahead of Munich, though he didn't provide details.

The Ukrainian Government aims to sidestep new US tariffs on imported steel and alu-

minum, according to Ukraine's First Deputy Prime Minister and Economic Development Minister, Yuliia Svyrydenko.

Metallurgical products make up nearly 58% of Ukrainian exports to the US, earning Ukraine just over USD 500 million last year, she said.

Ukraine is also offering to make a deal with Trump for continued American military aid in exchange for developing Ukraine's mineral industry, including rare earth elements needed for modern technology.

The Ukrainian air force said Russia fired 124 Shahed and

decoy drones across Ukraine overnight. In addition, at least 19 Russian missiles of various types hit Ukrainian gas production facilities, it said.

Reports in Russia of the claimed Ukrainian drone attack were sketchy. Officials rarely provide details of successful Ukrainian attacks.

The Governor of Russia's Saratov region, Roman Busargin, reported a Ukrainian drone attack that sparked a brief fire and inflicted damage on an unspecified "industrial facility." He said that the fire was put out within hours.

Army Captain among 2 soldiers killed in IED blast near Jammu LoC

JAMMU, Feb 11 (PTI)

TWO Army personnel, including a captain, were killed and another was injured when suspected terrorists set off an improvised explosive device (IED) near the Line of Control (LoC) in the Akhnoor sector near here on Tuesday, officials said.

This was the third incident of cross-border action by terrorists in the Jammu region in four days. It came a day after the general officer commanding of the Jammu-based White Knight Corps unit of the Army, Lieutenant General Navin Sachdeva, reviewed "hostile activities" along the LoC in Rajouri district. The Army confirmed the fatalities in the blast and said "own troops are dominating the area and search operations are underway".

The officials said the troops were on patrolling duty when they were hit by the powerful explosion near a forward post in the Bhattal area of Akhnoor in Jammu district at around 3:50 pm. The injured personnel were rushed to a hospital where two of them, including the captain, succumbed to their injuries, they said, adding that the condition of the other injured soldier is "out of danger". The White Knight Corps, also known as the XVI Corps, saluted the supreme sacrifice of the two soldiers. "Suspected Improvised Explosive Device blast reported in #Laleali in Akhnoor Sector during a fence patrol, resulting in two fatalities. Own troops are dominating the area and search operations are underway.