



SC slams pre-poll freebies

Are we not creating class of parasites?

NEW DELHI, Feb 12 (PTI)

ON POLITICAL parties promising "freebies" ahead of polls, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said, instead of bringing people into the mainstream for national development, "are we not creating a class of parasites?"

A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Augustine George Masih said it would be better to make people a part of the society's mainstream and contribute towards national development.

"Rather than promoting them to be a part of the mainstream of the society by contributing to the development of the nation, are we not creating a class of parasites?" it asked.

Justice Gavai went on to add, "Unfortunately, because of these freebies, which just on the anvil of elections are declared, like 'Ladki Bahin' and other schemes, people are not willing to work."

The apex court was hearing a matter concerning the right to shelter of homeless persons in urban areas and said people got free rations and money without working. "We quite appreciate your concern for them but would it not be better to make them a part of the mainstream of society and permit them to contribute to the development of the nation?" the bench asked.

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for one of the petitioners, said there was hardly

anybody in the country who did not want to work, if they had work. The judge said, "You must be having only one sided knowledge. I come from an agricultural family. Because of the freebies in Maharashtra which they just announced prior to elections, agriculturists are not getting labourers."

The court, however, said it did not want to debate.

It said everybody, including Attorney General R Venkataramani, was on the same page that providing shelter to the homeless merited due attention. "But at the same time, should it not be balanced?" the bench asked.

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India, France say global ocean treaty should come into effect at earliest

NEW DELHI, Feb 12 (PTI)

INDIA and France on Wednesday said the high seas treaty, a global pact for conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, should come into effect at the earliest.

During a meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also offered India's support to France for the United Nations Oceans Conference (UNOC-3), to be held in Nice in June.

UNOC-3 is an important milestone in international efforts for the conservation and sustainable use of oceans, they said.

"France and India recognise the importance of the Agreement on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity Beyond Areas

India, France intend to jointly develop advanced nuclear reactors

NEW DELHI, Feb 12 (PTI)

INDIA and France on Wednesday expressed an intent to jointly develop modern nuclear reactors, emphasising that nuclear power was crucial for energy security and transition to a low-carbon economy.

The two countries signed a letter of intent on Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and Advanced Modular Reactors

of Natural Jurisdiction (BBNJ Agreement) as one of the pillars of inclusive and holistic international ocean governance," according to a joint statement.

Having already signed the

(AMRs), according to a joint statement issued after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris.

"Prime Minister Modi and President Macron stressed that nuclear energy is an essential part of the energy mix for strengthening energy security and transitioning towards a low-carbon economy," according to the statement.

treaty, both nations said it should come into effect at the earliest.

The "high seas", also called "international waters", refer to areas beyond any country's national waters, exclusive eco-

nomic zone, and jurisdiction. No single country controls these waters, and all nations have the right to use them for navigation, fishing, research and other activities without interference.

Although the high seas cover more than 60 per cent of the ocean, only 1.2 per cent is currently protected. Countries adopted the high seas treaty or BBNJ Agreement in June 2023 to safeguard marine life. The treaty opened for signatures on September 20, 2023, allowing countries to express their intent to ratify and formally accept the agreement. The treaty will take effect once 60 countries sign and ratify it. India and France also reaffirmed their commitment to jointly addressing environmental crises and challenges, including climate change, and promoting sustainable lifestyles.

CDS raises question over China's 6th generation fighter aircraft

BENGALURU, Feb 12 (ANI)

CHIEF of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan on Wednesday raised doubts over the claimed capabilities of Chinese sixth-generation fighter aircraft saying that they are still in the developmental stage.

Asked about the Chinese sixth-generation fighter jet claims, CDS Chauhan told ANI that a large number of countries are pursuing a sixth-generation programme and it is his personal belief that all of them are some distance away.

He further pointed out that



Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) General Anil Chauhan visits the static display during the Aero India 2025, at Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru on Wednesday. (ANI)

the showcase of these technologies might be a part of the tactics of the countries.

Speaking to ANI, General Chauhan said, "It's very difficult to see these kinds of platforms with six-generation capability. What we are talking about is by external viewing of an aircraft and that too with a few seconds clip which will not give you an idea that this is six generation aircraft. In fact, a large number of countries are pursuing a six-generation programme and that's my personal belief that all of them are some distance away. But sometime back we had heard

about the capabilities of WS 10 or WS 15 engines which are there on 5th generation aircraft for the Chinese." "Sometime back, we had also heard about Chinese hiring a number of ex-pilots of the American and the British Air Force. They wanted to refine their drills and their systems, so they just show that they're still in that kind of a development stage. Not only as far as technology is concerned, but also tactics is concerned. So we are there. We have a programme for AMCA that's a 5th generation fighter, so that's somewhere down the line. But we are there," he added.

Top Army officer leads wreath-laying ceremony for 2 soldiers killed in IED blast in Jammu

JAMMU, Feb 12 (PTI)

GENERAL Officer Commanding of the Jammu-based White Knight Corps, Lieutenant General Navin Sachdeva, on Wednesday led the wreath-laying ceremony of two Army personnel, including a captain, who were killed in an IED blast near the Line of Control (LoC) in the Akhnoor sector here the previous day.

The solemn wreath-laying ceremony to pay homage to Captain Karamjit Singh Bakshi from Jharkhand's Ranchi and Naik Mukesh Singh Manhas from Jammu and Kashmir's Samba was held at the Indian Air Force (IAF) station here at 2 pm, before the mortal remains of the deceased were dispatched to their hometowns for the last rites.

Lt Gen. Sachdeva and other



Army personnel pay tribute to soldiers who were killed in a suspected IED blast near LoC, in Jammu's Akhnoor on Wednesday. (PTI)

ranks laid wreaths at the tricolour-wrapped coffins of the deceased, officials said, adding that senior IAF, police and civil

officers, including Divisional Commissioner, Jammu, Ramesh Kumar, Additional Director General of Police (ADGP) Anand

Jain and Inspector General of Police, Jammu zone, Bhim Sen Tuti, also attended the ceremony. A powerful improvised explosive device (IED), believed to have been planted by terrorists, exploded near a forward post in Akhnoor's Bhattal area on Tuesday, killing the two Army personnel and injuring another.

Army troops conducted a massive search operation following the blast but there was no trace of the terrorists, who are believed to have fled across the border after setting off the IED.

The bodies of the bravehearts were flown to their hometowns where their funeral will be held with full military honours later in the day, the officials said.

Incidentally, both Captain Bakshi and Naik Manhas were scheduled to get married in April, they added.

Modi, Macron

Call for deepening ties in Indo-Pacific



PARIS, Feb 12 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi and French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday called for enhancing trade and investment ties between the two countries and committed to further deepening their engagement in the Indo-Pacific and various global forums and initiatives.

After their wide-ranging talks, the two leaders also underlined their commitment to concrete actions to ensure that the global AI sector can drive beneficial social, economic, and environmental outcomes in the public interest.

A joint statement issued after the meeting here said the talks covered a full spectrum of bilateral relations, as well as key global and regional issues.

The two leaders stressed an urgent need for reform in the United Nations Security Council and agreed to coordinate closely on various global issues,

including the UNSC matters.

French President Macron reiterated France's firm support for India's permanent membership of the UNSC.

The two leaders reaffirmed their strong commitment to India-France Strategic Partnership while noting that it has steadily evolved into a mul-

French President Macron reiterated firm support for India's permanent UNSC membership

tifaceted relationship over the past 25 years. Prime Minister Modi flew together from Paris to Marseille in the French Presidential Aircraft on Tuesday evening and held discussions here on the full spectrum of bilateral relations and key global and regional issues.

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India's new consulate inaugurated in Marseille city of France

PARIS, Feb 12 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday jointly inaugurated India's new con-

sulate in France's Marseille city.

Modi is currently visiting France at the invitation of President Macron.

The two leaders jointly inaugurated India's new consulate in

Marseille with the press of a button amid cheers from the gathered crowd.

Many of these people had come bearing national flags of both India and France, while

some sported a tricolour headgear, adding colour to the occasion.

Later, the two leaders also interacted with a section of the people in the crowd.

Modi, Macron seal deals on N-energy to power AI

10 Pacts Signed, Modi Heads to US

Sachin.Parashar
@timesofindia.com

New Delhi: India and France adopted a roadmap for cooperation in AI and concluded nine other agreements, including three to boost civil nuclear cooperation, as PM Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron held bilateral talks, reaffirming their strong commitment to the

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strategic partnership between the two countries.

Among the major takeaways was an agreement for jointly developing and producing advanced and small modular reactors that could hold the key to powering the energy-intensive AI industry in both countries. The leaders discussed the West Asia situation and



PM Narendra Modi and French president Emmanuel Macron inaugurate the Indian consulate in Marseille on Wednesday

Ukraine war and enhanced their Indo-Pacific partnership with an agreement for triangular cooperation to promote sustainable development in third countries in the region.

While no agreement was signed in defence, Modi and Macron welcomed cooperation in building air and maritime assets. The leaders travelled to

gether in the French presidential aircraft to Marseille where they held talks, visited a war cemetery and inaugurated the Indian consulate. Macron hosted a private dinner for Modi and later went to the Marseille airport to see off the Indian PM who headed to the US.

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Four of the agreements signed were in areas related to technology and innovation. While the leaders didn't address the media, they acknowledged in a joint statement India-France civil nuclear ties and efforts in cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, notably in relation with the Jaitapur nuclear power plant project. They welcomed the partnership for co-designing, co-developing and co-producing advanced modular reactors (AMR) and small modular reactors (SMR). India has been in touch with the US, Russia and France for the past couple of years for jointly developing the technology and the issue is likely to figure in Modi's engagements in the US

too on Thursday.

Foreign secretary Vikram Misri said cooperation in SMR and AMR was important also for AI, recalling International Energy Agency chief Fatih Birol's remark that AI essentially means electricity. "And the amount of electricity that will be needed, if it is going to be sustainable, then it has to be something like nuclear power-driven electricity. And that is the area in which SMRs and AMRs can play a key role. It can also help us tackle complications in conventional projects," Misri said.

The leaders also agreed to work closely on implementing the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC) initiative, stressing its importance for connectivity, sustainable growth and access to clean energy. In this regard,



PM Modi and President Macron. France joined India in unequivocally condemning all forms of terrorism, including cross-border terrorism, and called for disruption of terror-financing networks

they acknowledged the strategic location of Marseille on the Mediterranean Sea, the joint statement said.

Modi and Macron underlined their common commitment to a free, open, inclusive, secure and peaceful Indo-Pa-

cific region, where France is a resident power. On trilateral cooperation in the region, Misri said the choice of projects will be driven by host countries. "These are demand-driven initiatives and not supply-driven initiatives.

And we feel that it is important for us to provide choices to countries, among our partners, with regard to development cooperation pathways. And I think India and France have a certain alignment in their thinking about this kind of cooperation," he said.

There was focus also on skill development and vocational education as two the leaders welcomed operationalisation of the Young Professionals Scheme (YPS), under the India-France Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement (MMPA), which is expected to facilitate two-way mobility of youth and professionals.

France reiterated its firm support for India's permanent membership of the UN Security Council as Modi and Macron emphasised the urgent need for reform of the Council. "The two leaders agreed to strengthen conversations on regulation of use of the veto in case of mass

atrocities. They held extensive discussions on long-term global challenges and current international developments and agreed to intensify their global and regional engagement, including through multilateral initiatives and institutions," the joint statement said.

France joined India in unequivocally condemning all forms of terrorism, including, importantly for India, cross-border terrorism, and called for the disruption of terrorism-financing networks and safe havens.

"They further agreed that no country should provide safe haven to those who finance, plan, support or commit terrorist acts. The leaders also called for concerted action against all terrorists, including through designations of individuals affiliated with groups that are listed by the UN Security Council 1267 Sanctions Committee," the joint statement said.

Modi visits project

PM pays tribute AI