India-France Relations

Political Relations:

Bilateral relations between India and France have traditionally been close and friendly. With the establishment of strategic partnership in 1998, there has been a significant progress in all areas of bilateral cooperation through regular high-level exchanges at the Head of State/Head of Government levels and growing cooperation and exchanges, including in strategic areas such as defence, counter-terrorism, nuclear energy and space. France was the first country with which India entered into an agreement on civil nuclear cooperation following the waiver given by the Nuclear Suppliers’ Group, enabling India to resume full civil nuclear cooperation with the international community. There is also a growing and wide-ranging cooperation in other areas such as trade and investment, culture, science & technology and education. France has consistently supported India’s increasing role at international fora, including India’s permanent membership of the UNSC and export control regimes like the NSG and MTCR.

Major Visits:

The momentum of bilateral exchanges has been maintained at the highest level over recent years. A clear indication of the importance that France assigns to the strategic partnership with India was the fact that India was the first country in Asia that President Hollande chose for a bilateral visit. President François Hollande paid a State visit to India on 14-15 February, 2013. He was accompanied by a 6 member Ministerial delegation as well as a large business delegation. A joint statement was issued at the conclusion of the delegation level talks. In Mumbai, he interacted with Indian business leaders. Four principal agreements signed during the visit were: (1) Cultural Exchange Programme (2) Letter of Intent on intensification of Cooperation in the fields of Education and Research (3) Statement of Intent for long-term Cooperation in Space (4) Joint Statement to follow-up and strengthen cooperation in the railway sector. In addition, there were a series of agreements signed in the Education, Science & Technology sectors.

EAM Shri Salman Khurshid paid an official visit to Paris on 10-11 January, 2013 to prepare for the President Hollande’s State Visit in February 2013. During the visit, he held talks with his counterpart Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius as well as Minister for Ecology, Sustainable Development, Transport and Energy, Mme. Delphine Batho and Minister for Higher Education and Research, Mme Genevieve Fioraso. Other major visits to France from India in 2013 included visits of Minister of Culture in April 2013, Minister for Urban Development in June 2013, Minister for Civil Aviation for the 50th Air Show in June 2013, Commerce, Industries and Textiles Minister in May and again in July 2013. The French Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian visited India on July 25-27, 2013. French Minister for Women’s Right and Spokesperson of French Government visited India in October 2013.

Mr. Laurent Fabius, French Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Development visited India from 30 June -01 July 2014. During the visit, he met EAM and called on Prime Minister and also held meeting with Finance and Defence Minister. Shri Prakash Javadekar, Minister of State for Environment and Forest attended the 16th Major Economics Forum held in Paris from 11-12 July 2014. He again visited Paris from 21-22 November 2014 to participate in 10th Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention and 26th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol.Smt. Harsimrat Kaur Badal, Hon’ble Minister for Food Processing Industries visited Paris from 18-21 October 2014 to participate in SIAL 2014. The French Defence Minister, Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian again visited India on 1st December 2014 and discussed bilateral relations with Shri Manohar Parikar, Defence Minister of India.

Institutional Structure for Dialogue:
France and India have instituted Strategic Dialogue at the level of National Security Advisors, whose 25th round took place in Paris on 30 January, 2014. The 26th round of Strategic Dialogue was held in New Delhi on 09 October 2014 which was led by NSA and Diplomatic Advisor to the French President. The last round of Annual Foreign Office Consultations at the level of Foreign Secretaries was held in Paris on 17 June, 2013. An Agreement on Mutual Exemption for Short Stay Visas for Diplomatic Passport Holders was signed during the visit. The 9th meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counter-terrorism was held in Paris on 20 June 2014. The first round of the India-France cyber dialogue was held in Paris on 24 May, 2013. The first round of the Track 1.5 India-France Annual Dialogue between the Observer Research Foundation, India and the Centre for International Studies and Research (CERI, Science Po – Paris) was held in Paris on 23 May, 2013. The 16th session of the Joint Committee for Economic and Technical Cooperation, at the level of Ministers of Commerce was held on 23-25 June, 2010 in Paris. The sixth edition of the India-France CEO’s Forum was held in Paris on 8-9 July, 2013. The first Annual Economic and Financial Dialogue was held in Paris on 29th October 2013 between Ministries of Finance of India and France. Also, first meeting of Joint Working Group on Sustainable Urban Development was held in Paris on 20 September 2013. The 9th meeting of Joint Working Group on IT was also held in Paris during October 2013.

Bilateral Trade & Investment Cooperation:

Trade

In 2013, the total goods trade between France and India was € 7.09 billion, registering a decline of 10.4% from 2012. India’s exports to France were valued € 4.375 billion whereas French exports to India totalled € 2.713 billion. This was mainly due to reduction in French exports to India. French imports from India also remained low due to weak demand. India registered a trade surplus of €1.66 billion, an increase of almost 18% from 2012. There was a growth in Indian exports to France for knitted textiles, machinery, electrical equipment and footwear. The French exports to India contracted by 16.7%. The biggest decline in Indian exports to France came in refined petroleum sector. India’s trade in Services with France has shown a growth in the past few years, reaching € 2.6 billion in 2012 with Indian export of services amounting to € 1.4 billion.

There has been an increase in India’s trade with France by 7.68 % during January-October 2014, which amounted to € 6.501 billion. India’s export increased by 14.73% during this period to reach € 4.285 billion. Imports from France declined marginally by 3.76% to reach € 2.215 billion, resulting in a trade surplus of € 2.065 billion. (Source: Statistics from the French Ministry of Economy, Finance and Industry).

Investments

France has emerged as a major source of FDI for India with about 750 big French companies already present in India. France is the 9th largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative investment of € 2.31 billion up to 2012. French companies continue to look at India as an attractive investment destination in order to expand their profits and diversify risks. There are around 100 Indian companies present in France, with a cumulative stock of approximately Euro one billion.

Civil Nuclear Energy Cooperation:

A landmark Agreement on Civil Nuclear Cooperation was signed between India and France on 30 September, 2008 during the visit of Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to France. Subsequently, during the visit of President Nicolas Sarkozy to India from 4-7 December 2010, the General Framework Agreement and the Early Works Agreement between NPCIL and Areva for
implementation of EPR NPP Units at Jaitapur were signed. Discussions are being held between two sides for implementation of the agreement.

**Space Cooperation:**

France and India view each other as important partners in space technology and applications. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and its French counterpart Centre National de Etudes Spatiales (CNES) have a rich history of cooperation and collaboration spanning about five decades. The two countries are working together to bring out joint commemorative stamps to highlight the excellent cooperation in the area of Space. ISRO and CNES jointly developed the Satellite for ARGOS and ALTIKA (SARAL) carrying a radar altimeter to study sea surface altitude (Ka band Altimeter - ALTIKA) and a data collection platform for collecting data from ocean buoys and weather data centres (ARGOS). CNES provided the payloads and ISRO was responsible for satellite platform and launch using PSLV and operations. The integrated SARAL satellite was launched on 25th February 2013. Under a commercial Launch Service Agreement between Antrix Corporation Limited and ASTRIUM SAS, a company under EADS, France, an advanced Remote Sensing satellite - SPOT-7 built by ASTRIUM SAS was successfully launched on-board ISRO’s Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle from India on 30th June 2014.

Arianespace, France has been the major provider of launch services to Indian Geo-Stationary satellites. Subsequent to the launch of APPLE satellite on a co-operative mode with Europe, 18 Geo-Stationary satellites of India have been launched by Arianespace on a commercial basis. India’s advanced weather satellite INSAT-3D was launched successfully on 25th July 2013 onboard Ariane-5 launcher from Kourou, French Guiana. India’s advanced communication satellite GSAT-7 was launched on 29th August 2013 by Ariane-5 launcher from French Guiana. On 7th December 2014, India’s multi-band telecommunications satellite GSAT-16 was precisely placed into the intended Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit by the Ariane-5 launch vehicle.

**Defence Cooperation:**

The defence relations between the two countries are strong and have been growing within the framework of structured talks under the Indo-French Defence Cooperation Agreement, several meetings on industrial collaboration and service exchanges are held regularly. The High Level Committee for Defence Cooperation (HCDC) at the level of Defence Secretaries, met in New Delhi on 26-27 April 2012 and the dates for next round is being worked out. The first India-France joint army exercise, SHAKTI was conducted in India at Chaubattia from 9-22 October 2011. SHAKTI-13, Indo-French Joint Army Exercise was conducted in French Alps in September 2013. The fifth edition of the Indo-French Air Exercise Garuda was held in Jodhpur on 02-13 June 2014. Indo - French Naval Exercise, VARUNA was held in the Mediterranean sea off the port of Toulon from 19-22 July, 2012. Three Indian Naval ships made a port call at St Denis in the Reunion Islands in Oct 2014. The Chief of Army Staff, Indian Army visited France in May 2013 while the Chief of Naval Staff, French Navy visited India on 24-25 November 2014.

**Cultural Cooperation:**

Indian culture enjoys a wide and discerning audience among the French population, as is evident in the numerous and frequent cultural events organized all over France, spanning the entire spectrum of Indian art, music, dance, cinema and literature. The Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) for 2013-15 was signed during the visit of President Hollande to India on 14 February 2013. The Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) sponsored in 2013-14 visits of Indian artists to France as also exchange of students in the field of culture and art. A significant number of Indian
artists also performed in France on a commercial basis or at the initiative of various local cultural associations, outside the purview of official exchanges.

In keeping with the importance both the countries accord to cinema and the willingness to enhance cooperation in the field, a revised Indo-French Bilateral Film Co-Production Agreement was signed during the visit of French President to India in December 2010. The 15-month long Indian cultural festival - "Namaste France" held from 14 April, 2010 to 28 June, 2011 was a comprehensive presentation of Indian culture including art, music, dance, fashion, films, and literature as also business and education. The Festival was organized in response to ‘Bonjour India’, a French cultural festival, organized by the French Embassy in India in 2009-2010. The French Embassy in India has successfully organized the second edition of ‘Bonjour India’ from January-March, 2013. The second edition of ‘Namaste France’ would be held in France from September 15-November 30, 2016. The Centenary of Indian cinema in 2013 was celebrated by various film festivals in France who dedicated full thematic events to Indian cinema, including the famous Cannes International Film Festival.

An MOU was signed on 26th January 2012 between the Ministry of Culture of India and the Louvre Museum with the aim of establishing an active partnership in the area of exchange of competencies and expertise, particularly in the field of museology, temporary exhibitions etc. Louvre Museum aims to hold an exhibition in India in 2016. An MoU was signed between Crafts Museum, New Delhi and Bargoin Museum, Clermont –Ferrand for cooperation in the conservation of textiles in November, 2012 in France.

Educational and Technical Cooperation:

The bilateral educational cooperation between India and France has grown over the last few years. The project for construction of an annex for Maison De L'Inde (FMDL), which commenced in July 2012, was completed in October 2013. Under the extension project, 72 additional rooms have been constructed adjacent to the present MDL building. India-France Technology Summit was held in October 2013 in New Delhi and saw participation of 300 French and over 500 Indian representatives from government/research organizations, universities and companies. 750 B2B meetings were held for exploring techno-business partnerships. An exhibition by over 50 Indian and French technology companies from diverse sectors was organized during the Summit. Further, 11 MoUs were signed during the Summit. A number of Indian students and scholars visit France under the bilateral exchange programmes. There are about 3000 Indian students studying in France. Around 400 MoUs have been signed between Indian and French universities and private institutions. One of the important initiatives in the field of bilateral education has been IIT Project in Rajasthan. A Letter of Intent has been signed under which a French Consortium, comprising higher education & research institutes, will send faculty members, experts, academicians, students for research/teaching to IIT-R. French side will also contribute to establishment of three Centres of excellence /research laboratories at IIT-R.

Cooperation in the field of Railways:

There has been longstanding cooperation in the field of railway between India and France. During the visit of President Hollande to India in February, 2013, a joint statement to strengthen the cooperation in the Railways sector between the two countries, and a Memorandum of Understanding for Technical Cooperation in the field of Railways between Indian Railways and SociétéNationale des Chemins de FerFrançais (SNCF), the French National Railways were signed. On 24-25 November 2014 Minister of Railways, Shri. Suresh PrabhakarPrabhu inaugurated the Indo-French Rail seminar on ‘High & Semi Higher Speed, Multimodal stations, Infrastructure & Financing’ in New Delhi.
Indian Community in France:

The Indian community, including NRIs, in France is estimated to be around 106,000, largely originating from Puducherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandranagar. There are also large communities of PIOs in the Reunion Island (about 250,000), Guadeloupe (about 57000), Martinique (about 6000) and St. Martin (about 300), the overseas territories/departments of France.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Paris website:
http://www.ambinde.fr/

Embassy of India, Paris Facebook page:

Embassy of India, Paris Twitter account:
https://twitter.com/Indian_Embassy

Embassy of India, Paris Youtube channel:
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCX6XYIVPq0C0NeNgMIjRmsg

Issuu: http://issuu.com/embassyindiaparis

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