

**Ministry of External Affairs**  
**(Europe West Division)**

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**Brief on India-France Bilateral Relations**

India and France have traditionally close and friendly relations. In 1998, the two countries entered into a **Strategic Partnership** which is emblematic of their convergence of views on a range of international issues apart from a close and growing bilateral relationship.

The areas of **defence & security cooperation, space cooperation and civil nuclear cooperation** constitute the principal pillars of our Strategic Partnership. India and France also have a robust economic partnership. Apart from these, India and France are increasingly engaged in new areas of cooperation such as maritime security in the Indo Pacific region, counter terrorism, climate change, renewable energy and sustainable growth and development among others.

India and France share a close degree of **convergence on a range of regional and global issues**. France has continued to support India's claim for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council and the reforms of the United Nations. France's support was vital in India's accession to Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), Wassenaar Arrangement (WA) and Australia Group (AG). France continues to support India's bid for accession to the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG).

There exist vibrant bilateral **cultural and educational** linkages as also growing **people-to-people** contacts. **Indian diaspora** also has a sizeable presence in metropolitan France and its overseas departments/territories.

**COVID-19 Cooperation**

India and France closely cooperated at the peak of the pandemic in both countries. India supplied France with nearly 2 million hydroxychloroquine tablets and 36 MT of paracetamol (API) after having lifted export restrictions on these life-saving drugs. France expressed its gratitude by sending 120 ventilators, 50 thousand serological tests and 50 thousand nose/throat swabs as aid. France also announced a 200 million euro loan to India to help the vulnerable sections most severely affected by the pandemic. Over 2500 Indians had been repatriated from France and a similar number of French citizens were repatriated from India to their home countries through special flights.

In the second wave, France provided 18 oxygen plants till date to hospitals across India which will fulfill oxygen requirements for 10 years. France also supplied over 100 tonnes of Liquid Medical Oxygen to the state of Maharashtra through

the French industrial gas producer Air Liquide. Besides this, P2G assistance also came in from several French companies, including Airbus.

## **Recent high level political exchanges**

### **Head of States**

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron have a strong relationship underscored by convergences in global and regional priorities. In 2020, there was no physical meeting, on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, however there have been several telephonic exchanges between the two leaders. Most recently, PM held a telephone conversation with President Macron on **26 May 2021**. Issues of mutual interest such as strategic autonomy, the Indo-Pacific region, defence cooperation and environment were discussed. The Indian Prime Minister gave the keynote address at the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of Vivatech, held in Paris, in **June 2021**.

On 24 July 2020, President Macron wrote to Prime Minister Modi expressing solidarity with India in the fight against Covid-19, by sharing medical equipment and technical expertise. Prime Minister Modi wrote back to him on 31 July 2020 expressing gratitude, sharing a desire for advancing the bilateral strategic partnership and engaging actively in the Indo-Pacific region.

PM visited France in August 2019 at the special invitation of President Macron for the 2019 G-7 Summit, where India was one of the 'Goodwill' partners. The visit comprised two segments: the bilateral component (22-23 August in Chantilly, Paris) and the G-7 related visit in Biarritz (25-26 August). The bilateral meeting entailed discussions on defence partnership, civil nuclear cooperation, space, counter-terrorism, energy, Indo-Pacific, maritime security and people to people contacts. The outcomes of the visit included India-France Roadmap on Cybersecurity and Digital Technologies and [four other Agreements/MoUs](#). On 23 August, PM met the then French PM Edouard Philippe and discussed strengthening of economic relations and people to people contacts. PM also addressed the Indian community in Paris and virtually inaugurated a memorial for the victims of the Air India crashes of 1950 and 1966. In Biarritz PM addressed the session on digital transformation as the lead speaker and participated in another session on climate, biodiversity and oceans.

PM and President Macron held a pull aside meeting on the sidelines of the of the G-20 2019 in Osaka in June 2019. They were also co-speakers at the Leaders' Dialogue on Strategic Responses to Terrorist and Violent Extremist Narratives held on UNGA sidelines on 23 September 2019 in New York. The two had earlier held a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G-20 meet in December 2018 in Buenos Aires.

**President Emmanuel Macron and Mrs. Brigitte Macron paid a State Visit to India from 10-12 March 2018** during which they visited New Delhi, Agra, Mirzapur and Varanasi. After the ceremonial welcome in New Delhi, President Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi held restricted and delegation-level talks. Fourteen inter-governmental agreements were signed following the talks including one for the provision of reciprocal logistics support between the respective Armed Forces. In addition to the visit Joint Statement, a "Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region" and the "India-France Joint Vision for Space Cooperation" were also issued. The President of India hosted a banquet in honour of President Macron as also delegations of other countries which had assembled in New Delhi for the Founding Conference of the International Solar Alliance.

PM visited France on 2-3 June 2017. This was the first meeting with President Macron. Apart from a meeting at the Elysee Palace, the two leaders visited Arc de Triomphe and laid a wreath to pay homage to the memory of the Indian soldiers who died fighting in defence of France in the two world wars.

Additionally, former French President Francois Hollande visited India **24-26 January 2016** as the Chief Guest of India's Republic Day celebrations. In a historic first, a French military contingent also marched on Rajpath on the Republic Day and thus France became the first ever foreign country to have been invited to participate in the march. PM visited France twice in 2015. First in April 2015, which was his first visit to a European country as PM. Then in November 2015, to attend the inaugural Leaders' Event at the COP-21 Climate Change Summit and launched the International Solar Alliance jointly with President Hollande in the presence of the then UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon.

### **Other High level Visits**

#### **India to France**

**Hon'ble Vice-President** Shri Venkaiah Naidu represented India at the commemorative ceremony of World War-I Armistice centenary and also participated in the inaugural Paris Peace Forum on 11 November 2018 in Paris. He inaugurated the memorial for fallen Indian soldiers at Villiers Guislan on 10 November.

**EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar** visited Paris on 11-12 November 2019. He called on President Macron and held meetings with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian. He attended the 2nd edition of the Paris Peace Forum where he addressed a high-level panel-discussion on multilateral governance of cyberspace, alongside French and German FMs. He addressed a group of eminent businessmen, think-tankers and media representatives at Institut Montaigne (a prominent French think-tank). EAM met Secretary of State to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne on the sidelines of G20 Foreign Ministers meeting in Nagoya, Japan on 23 November 2019. More recently, he held a

telephonic conversation with Le Drian on 30 June 2020. EAM addressed the Ministerial meeting of the Alliance for Multilateralism that was held virtually on 26 September 2020 and also addressed the forum virtually on 24 February 2021.

**Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh visited France from 07- 10 Oct 2019** for the 2nd edition of the Defence Dialogue with the French Minister of Armed Forces Ms. Florence Parly. He called on President Macron and interacted with heads of key French defence industry enterprises. On 08 October 2019 RM visited Bordeaux to attend the handing over ceremony of the first of the 36 Rafale fighter aircrafts being purchased from France under the inter-governmental contract signed in September 2016. He also visited select defence industry sites in France. Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman had also visited France on 11-14 October 2018 for a bilateral visit and took stock of the Rafale programme.

**MoS External Affairs Shri V. Muraleedharan visited Reunion island** on 23-24 October 2019 along with an Indian business delegation to participate in a summit meeting on “Regional Economic Integration in the Indo-Pacific Region”, following an invitation from French Presidency. He held conversations with several French ministers and also called on French President Emmanuel Macron. He also participated, virtually, in the Summit on the Financing of African Economies, hosted by France in May 2021.

### **France to India**

**The French Foreign Minister, Mr. Jean-Yves Le Drian** visited Delhi and Bengaluru on 13-15 April 2021. He held an extensive bilateral meeting with EAM, besides also meeting other dignitaries, including Shri Prakash Javadekar, Minister of Environment Forest Climate Change. He also participated in the Raisina Dialogue, one of only 3 foreign ministers to have physically been in Delhi during the Dialogue. In Bengaluru he signed an agreement with ISRO for cooperation on India’s first human space mission Gaganyaan.

**The Diplomatic Advisor to the French President, Emmanuel Bonne** and the NSA of India, Shri Ajit Doval, held their annual Strategic Dialogue on 7 January 2021 in Delhi.

**The French Minister for Ecological Transition, Ms. Barbara Pompili,** visited India from 28 January to 02 February 2021. She held meetings with Shri Prakash Javadekar, Minister of Environment Forest Climate Change; Shri RK Singh, MoS (IC) Ministry of Power and Renewable Energy and Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, MoS (IC) Housing and Urban Affairs.

Florence Parly, French Minister for Armed Forces, visited India on 10 September 2020, to attend the official induction ceremony of the first batch of Rafale aircraft by the Indian Airforce. She held meetings with RM and NSA.

**Other French Ministerial visits to India,** in recent times, have been those of Culture Minister Franck Riester (27-28 January 2020); Secretary of State to the

Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Mr. Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne (10 June 2019); Secretary of State to the Minister for Ecological & Transition, Ms. Brune Poirson for the 2nd General Assembly of the ISA (30 October – 1 November 2019); Minister of Solidarity and Health, Ms Agnès Buzyn for the preparatory meeting of the Sixth Replenishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (8 February 2019); Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian (December 2018 and November 2017); and Minister for the Armed Forces, Ms. Florence Parly (October 2017). A number of French Ministers had accompanied President Macron during his State Visit to India in March 2018.

Recent exchanges at the **Parliamentary level** include the visit of President of India-France Friendship Group in National Assembly Ms. Celine Calvez to India on 27-28 January 2020 and the visit of a French Senate delegation to India in September 2018 as well as in September 2019.

### **Economic Cooperation**

Both India and France have important bilateral investments and trade and commercial cooperation, particularly in sectors involving IT corridors, smart-cities, railways, capital and trade exchanges, skill development etc. France has emerged as a major source of FDI for India with more than 1,000 French establishments already present in India. France is the 7th largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative FDI stock of USD 9 billion from April 2000 to December 2020, which represents 2 % of the total FDI inflows into India. There are more than 150 Indian companies operating in France (including sub-subsidiaries), employing more than 7,000 persons.

France's GDP is almost similar to that of India's, but our bilateral trade remains far below potential, even though India has enjoyed a consistent trade surplus. In the period April 2018-March 2019, India-France bilateral trade stood at 11.59 billion Euro (+0.6% compared to the previous FY). India's exports to France were valued at 6.23 billion Euro, up 4%. Meanwhile, French exports to India decreased by 3.07% during the same period to 5.35 billion Euro. Trade with France constitutes only 1.41% of India's total international trade.

A Joint Economic Committee (JEC/JCM) exists at the level of Ministers of Commerce and Foreign Trade from both sides. The 18th JCM was held virtually on 27 November 2020 which was co-chaired by Shri Hardeep Singh Puri, Hon'ble Minister of State for Commerce & Industry and Mr. Frank Reister, French Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and Attractiveness. A joint announcement was also signed for setting up of a FAST-TRACK system for French companies in India and Indian companies in France.

Joint Working Groups exist in various fields such as (i) IT & Telecommunications; (ii) Roads; (iii) Sustainable Urban Development; (iv) Agriculture and Food Processing; (v) Mineral Exploration and Development; (vi) Energy; (vii) Environment and (viii) Post.

An India-France CEOs' Forum exists at the level of top CEOs from both sides meeting annually and presenting their reports to the Prime Minister of India and President of France. The Forum is led by Mr. Dhruv Sawhney, CEO of Triveni Engineering and Mr. Paul Hermelin, CEO of Capgemini. The last round of CEO's Forum met on 10 March 2018 at New Delhi coinciding with the visit of the French President to India. Shri Piyush Goyal, Commerce & Industries Minister, held a virtual interaction with French businesses in February 2021.

Almost all the major French companies are present in India including Renault, Saint Gobain, Veolia, Michelin, Capgemini, Sanofi, EDF, Airbus, Lactalis, Sodexo, Total and others. India's Reliance, Tata, Mahindra, L&T and other big companies have tied up joint cooperation with major French companies like Dassault, SAFRAN, Thales, Schneider Electric and others in the defence and electronics sector. French infrastructure companies are looking forward to major opportunities in Indian projects including in smart cities and renewable energy. SNCF, the French railways and the Indian Railways have established a Permanent Indo-French Railway Forum. They have been cooperating in the studies for the feasibility of semi-high speed upgrade of Delhi-Chandigarh section and station development study of Ambala and Ludhiana.

The Bilateral Investment and Protection Agreement between India and France expired in 2010, ten years after coming into force. GoI intends to replace it with a revised Bilateral Investment Treaty. A model text of the agreement was proposed by the Indian side in 2015. French side has informed that as all trade-related agreements are subject to the purview of EU, France cannot unilaterally decide in the matter. As declared during the visit of President Macron to India, both India and France support the efforts of India and EU to negotiate a early harvest EU-India Trade Agreement.

### **Development Cooperation**

AFD, the French Agency for Development has, since 2008, committed close to 2 billion Euros in the form of loans to the State and State-owned companies, as well as technical assistance programs. It has extended a loan of Euro 100 million to the Government of India for its Smart Cities Mission. French side has been actively cooperating with various programmes in especially three Smart Cities, viz. Chandigarh, Nagpur and Puducherry. AFD has partnerships with the Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency (IREDA), Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and it works closely with the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA) through Annual Negotiation Meetings (ANM). In May 2020, the advisory board of the Agence Française de Développement (AFD) announced that it has allocated 200 million Euros and will sign an agreement with India's Finance Ministry to support welfare measures and the most vulnerable sections of society.

### **Defence Cooperation**

Cooperation in defence is the cornerstone of the India France strategic partnership. The two countries have a Ministerial level Defence dialogue, which has been held annually since 2018.

The three services also have regular defence exercises; viz. Exercise Shakti (Army; the last one took place in November 2019 in India), Exercise Varuna (Navy; is scheduled be held in the gulf of Oman from 25 to 27 April 2021), Exercise Garuda (Air Force; July 2019 in France). The Indian Navy also participated in the French led La Pérouse exercise, along with other Quad members from 05 to 07 April 2021. Various staff courses, training programmes etc. also take place regularly.

**Purchase of Rafale aircraft:** The Inter-governmental agreement for purchase of 36 Rafale fighter aircrafts (30 fighter aircrafts and 6 trainers) by India in flyaway condition was signed in New Delhi on 23 September 2016. On 10 September 2020, French Armed Forces' Minister Florence Parly participated in the formal induction ceremony of five Rafale aircraft at the Ambala air base. So far 18 Rafale aircrafts have been ferried to India.

### **Space Cooperation**

India and France have a rich history of cooperation in the field of space, since the 1960s with the construction of Sriharikota launch-pad with French technical assistance. Building on the historical linkages in the arena of civilian space, both India and France issued a "Joint Vision for Space Cooperation" during the visit of President Macron to India in March 2018.

ISRO and the French Space Agency, CNES have been carrying on various joint research programmes and collaborating in satellite launches. Both sides have exchanged cooperative proposals addressing Earth observation, Maritime domain awareness, Global navigation satellite system, exploration of solar system, space transportation system and human spaceflight. As part of the ongoing bilateral cooperation between ISRO and Arianespace, GSAT-11 was launched from Kourou (French Guyana) in December 2018; GSAT-30 was launched on 16 January 2020. France continues to be a major supplier of components and equipment for the Indian space programme.

### **Civil Nuclear Cooperation**

An agreement on civil nuclear cooperation was signed between India and France on 30 September 2008 during the visit of then Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh to France. Subsequently, during the visit of then French President Nicolas Sarkozy to India in December 2010, the General Framework Agreement and the Early Works Agreement between NPCIL and M/s AREVA for the implementation of EPR for the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project (JNPP) were signed.

Further, India is a member of ITER, a multi-national consortium formed to construct a experimental fusion reactor, located in Cadarache, France. India's role in ITER project is managed by Department of Atomic Energy.

### **Environment and Renewable Energy**

France is a founding member of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), announced by PM Modi in 2015 at UN Climate Change CoP21. The 3rd ISA Assembly held in October 2020 re-elected India and France as President and Co-President of the ISA. The countries signed an MoU on renewable energy in January 2021. The objective of the MoU is to promote bilateral cooperation in the field of new and renewable energy on the basis of mutual benefit, equality and reciprocity. It covers technologies relating to solar, wind, hydrogen and biomass energy.

A key outcome the visit of the French Minister of Ecological Transition's visit was the announcement to celebrate 2021-22 as Indo French Year of Environment. AFD and Solar Energy Corporation of India Limited (SECI) signed a letter of intent for developing 150 MW floating solar power system in January 2021.

### **Cooperation in the fields of S&T and Education**

In the field of S&T, the Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advance Research (CEFIPRA) based in New Delhi, established in 1987, plays a major role by identifying and funding joint proposals for research projects. Several other bilateral cooperation programmes exist including an Indo-French Ministerial-level Joint Committee on Science and Technology, established in 2016, whose first meeting was held in New Delhi in June 2018.

The French government has started granting the residence permit called "Authorization Provisoire de Sejour" (APS) of 12 months for the second year after the completion of the first period of 12 months which was already been granted to Indian students of Masters-level and above. GoI, on its part, has implemented the facilitation of visa for 250 French students annually under the French VIE scheme (Volontariat International en Enterprises) in which French students fresh after graduation are encouraged by the French government to seek internship opportunities in companies abroad to supplement their academic experience.

During the visit of PM to France (August 2019), the two sides set the student exchange target to 20,000 by 2025. During this visit, an Administrative Arrangement was also signed between the two countries for Cooperation in Skill Development and Vocational Training. An Agreement on the mutual recognition of degrees has entered into force. Two Knowledge Summits have also been held courtesy the French side in March 2018 (New Delhi) and October 2019 (Lyon).

A Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement between India and France. The Agreement was signed in March, 2018 during the State Visit of the French President to India. It has been ratified by India and is soon to be ratified by the French Parliament as well.

## **Cyberspace and Digital technology**

The two countries have several convergences in their respective positions on digital sovereignty, privacy and data protection. The Indo French Roadmap on Cybersecurity and Digital Technology was signed between the two countries during PM Modi's visit to France on 22 August 2019. The roadmap lays down areas of cooperation such as cybersecurity, fight against cybercrime, regulation of Artificial Intelligence, protection of personal information, digital governance et al. There exists an MoU between ANSII and Cert-in on exchange of information signed in 2019.

In the field of exascale computing, Atos in collaboration with CDAC has developed "PARAM-Siddhi- AI", India's fastest supercomputer. Additionally, there exist immense potential in collaborating in future technologies such as 5G and beyond, developing global tech standards, training and capacity building programs and connecting the start up ecosystems of the two countries.

The Indian Prime Minister gave the keynote address at the 5<sup>th</sup> Edition of Vivatech, held in Paris, in **June 2021**.

## **Counter-terrorism**

India and France have consistently condemned terrorism and have resolved to work together for adoption of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) in the UN. Following the Pulwama attack (Feb 2019), France steadfastly supported India and nationally listed the Pakistan-based 'global terrorist' Hafiz Saeed, which was followed up with the listing at the UN. France has also supported India's requests to block attempts by Pakistan to enlist innocent Indian citizens under the UNSC 1267 sanctions Committee based on fabricated charges. As France witnessed a string of terrorist attacks in 2020, most notably the "Paris stabbing attack" in September and beheading of Samuel Paty in October 2020, India expressed its condolences. In the face of the backlash against purported French "Islamophobia", in countries such as Turkey and Pakistan, Prime Minister Modi extended his support to President Macron.

## **Cultural Cooperation**

Indian culture enjoys wide following amongst the people of France. An Indian Cultural Centre, named Vivekananda Cultural Centre, is being opened in Paris. The building which was acquired for the purpose is undergoing renovation.

*Namaste France* was held in 2016 across France displaying various facets of Indian art and culture. The festival was very well received and the next edition of *Namaste France* will be held in 2021-2022. Similarly, the *Bonjour India* festival will be held in India in 2022.

A Cultural Exchange Programme, initially for the period 2016 to 2018, continues and is under implementation. GoI has also offered five scholarships for study of

Sanskrit in India to French nationals. Various other bilateral programmes of cultural cooperation are under implementation.

The International Day of Yoga has been organized by the Embassy of India, Paris in Paris and in other cities of France since 2016. Various events have also been held to commemorate the 150th birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, the 550th Birth anniversary of Shri Gurunanak Devji, and the 70th year of the Constitution of India. These events have received wide acclaim and press coverage. Several events have been planned in 2021-22 to commemorate 75 years of India's independence and celebrate 'Amrit Mahotsav'.

### **Indian community in France**

The Indian diaspora in France is estimated to be around 5,00,000, majority being French citizens based in the French overseas territories. Around 109,000 Indian citizens reside in mainland France, with a majority originating from former French colonies of Puducherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandernagore. A sizeable number of Indian origin population lives in the French Overseas Territories of the Reunion Island (300,000), Guadeloupe (60,000) and Martinique (6,000). There has also been an increasing number of students (nearly 10,000) and professionals studying and working in mainland France. There are more than 50 Indian community organizations active in France. Major communities constituting the Indian origin population originate from Puducherry and Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Punjab.

### **Consular issues**

Bilateral consular relations are guided by the following four agreements:

- India-France Extradition Treaty (August 2005)
- India-France Mutual Legal Assistance Treaty (MLAT) in Criminal Matters (10 October 2005)
- India-France Agreement on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons (January 2008)
- India-France agreement on exemption of visa requirements for diplomats (October 2013)

During the visit of PM to France (August 2019), the two sides decided to initiate a regular Consular Dialogue, the first edition of which was held in July 2020 through virtual mode.

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