

India-France Bilateral Brief

Overview

India and France have traditionally enjoyed close and friendly relations and share deep and enduring Strategic Partnership (SP) covering all aspects of bilateral cooperation which involves a strategic component. Launched on 26 January 1998, India's first-ever Strategic Partnership, embodied the core vision of both the countries to enhance their respective strategic independence by drawing upon a strong and enhanced bilateral cooperation. Defence & security, civil nuclear matters and space constitute the principal pillars of this strategic cooperation and now includes a strong Indo-Pacific component. In the recent years the partnership has broadened to include maritime security, digitalisation, cyber security and advanced computing, counter terrorism, climate change, renewable and sustainable growth and development among others.

2. The core of the India-France long-standing partnership is underpinned by our shared democratic values, belief in multilateralism as a means to tackle global challenges, respect for international law, strong economic, cultural academic, and people-to-people ties.

3. The year 2023 is an exceptional year with significant milestones in India-France relations. It marked 25 years of India-France Strategic Partnership. PM paid an Official Visit from 13-14 July as the Guest of Honour at the French National Day *inter alia* adopting a roadmap 'Horizon 2047', setting the course for the next 25 years, which will in-turn mark centenaries of India's independence and diplomatic relations between both countries. On the cultural front, a 4-day long Festival of India, 'Namaste France' was organized from 6-9 July in Paris, drawing renowned Indian performing and visual artists – classical, modern, contemporary and folk for live performances

and exhibitions, showcasing India's diversity and richness of culture and cuisine to over 20,000 visitors.

High-level Political Exchanges

4. On 1 Dec 2023, PM met President Macron on the sidelines of the COP 28 Summit in Dubai and exchanged views on wide range of areas, including climate action, climate financing, sports, energy, defence and civil nuclear cooperation.

5. On 10 September 2023, PM had a bilateral meeting over lunch with President Macron during G-20 Leaders' Summit in New Delhi. The leaders reviewed the progress in bilateral relations since their last meeting in July, 2023 in Paris. President Macron also participated in the Virtual G20 Leaders' Summit hosted by PM on 22 November 2023.

6. On 13-14 July 2023, PM paid an Official Visit to Paris at the invitation of President Macron as the Guest of Honour at the French National Day. PM met President Macron and had delegation level talks at Élysée Palace (official residence of the President). Both leaders *inter alia* adopted a roadmap "Horizon 2047: Charting the future of India-France Strategic Partnership", setting the course for the next 25 years. Indo-Pacific Roadmap was agreed upon and important MoUs/Lols/Agreements were signed in the areas of Institutional Cooperation, Space, Defence, Science, Strategy, Sustainable Development and people to people cooperation.

7. PM attended the French National Day on 14 July and witnessed along with President Macron the Bastille Day Parade wherein, the Indian Air Force aircraft performed fly-past and a tri-services contingent took part in the Bastille Day Parade. President hosted a banquet dinner in honour of PM in the Louvre Museum. PM was conferred with France's highest honor, the grand cross of the Légion d'Honneur (Legion of Honor). During the visit, PM met Ms.

Elisabeth Borne, Prime Minister of France, Mr. Gerard Larcher and Ms. Yael Braun-Pivet, Presidents of Senate and National Assembly respectively. He also interacted with Indian diaspora in a community event which was also attended by several members of French Parliament, Mayors, French dignitaries and business leaders. He also met CEOs and eminent French personalities.

8. On 20 May 2023 in Hiroshima, PM held a bilateral meeting with President Macron on the margins of G7 Summit in Hiroshima and discussed a broad range of issues, including cooperation in trade and economic spheres, co-production and manufacturing in the defence sector, and civil nuclear cooperation.

9. On 14 February 2023, PM and President Macron virtually attended the launch event of the new partnership between Air India and Airbus as Air India signed an Lol to acquire 250 aircrafts from Airbus. The event was also attended by India's Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, Airbus CEO Guillaume Faury and Chairman of Tata Sons, Natarajan Chandrasekaran.

Other high-level interactions in the past include:

10. Mr Rajnath Singh, Defence Minister visited Paris from 11-12 October 2023 for the 5th meeting of the Annual Defence Dialogue with his French counterpart Mr Sebastien Lecornu. He also visited the Safran Engine Division's R&D Centre at Gennevilliers near Paris and met with the CEOs of top French defence companies. He also interacted with the Indian community in Paris.

11. Ms Nirmala Sitharaman, Finance Minister visited Paris from 22-23 June 2023 to attend the 'New Global Financing Pact' Summit. She met her counterparts from France, Brazil and UAE on the sidelines. She met France's Minister of Economy, Finance and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty Mr. Bruno Le Maire and exchanged views on key G20 deliverables under Indian Presidency among other issues.

12. Mr. Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce & Industry, Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, and Textiles, visited Paris from 11-12 April 2023 to co-chair the India France Business Summit. The Summit was attended by 400 registered participants including 105 at the level of CEO or Presidents. He co-chaired a round-table luncheon meeting of CEOs along with Mr. Olivier Becht, Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade, Economic Attractiveness. He also attended the 'Namaste France' Gala Dinner as the Chief Guest along with Minister Becht. The Gala dinner was attended by nearly 600 including 25 French Members of Parliament, over 40 CEOs, 40 Ambassadors, Presidents of Museums, Heads of think-tanks, academics, commentators, media representatives and community leaders.

13. Ms. Catherine Colonna, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs visited Delhi on 2 March 2023 for the G20 Foreign Ministers Meeting. She met EAM Dr. Jaishankar and discussed major international issues and reviewed various aspects of bilateral partnership. She also met Minister of culture to discuss the new National Museum project. She unveiled the 'Villa Swagatam', an India-wide artist residency program; attended an event on gender equality and launched an exchange program for talented French and Indian young people.

Ministerial Visits

14. Mr. Jean Noel Barrot, French Minister for Digital Affairs visited Delhi to take part in the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI) held on 13 Dec 2023.

15. Mr. Kiren Rijiju, Minister of Earth Sciences visited Paris from 08-10 November 2023 to participate in the 'One Planet Polar Summit'. He participated in the Presidential dinner at Élysée Palace. He also met French Minister of Higher Education and research, French Minister for the Ecological Transition Mr. Christophe Bechu and Mayor of Nice Mr. Christian Estrosi.

16. Ms. Chrysoula Zacharopoulou, Minister of State for Development, Francophonie and International Partnerships visited India from 31 October-01 November 2023 to co-chair the Sixth Assembly of the International Solar Alliance with Minister of Power, and New and Renewable Energy Shri R.K Singh. The visit also focused on the Paris Agenda for People and the Planet, which was adopted in June 2023 in Paris.

17. Mr. Bruno le Maire, Minister for Economy, Finance, and Industrial and Digital Sovereignty of France, visited India from 23-24 February 2023 to participate in the G7 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meeting and then the G20 Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors meetings. He also met the Finance Minister Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman.

18. Mr. Édouard Philippe, Former Prime minister of France and presently Mayor of Le Havre paid an official visit to India including Delhi and Mumbai on 14th - 17th March 2023, to boost bilateral economic ties, cooperation on ports, and cooperation between local governments. He called on EAM Dr S. Jaishankar and Mr Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.

Defence Cooperation

19. India and France have a strong and robust defence partnership with an increasing 'Atmanirbharata' element in it. The defence cooperation between the two sides is reviewed under Annual Defence Dialogue (Defence Minister level) and High Committee on Defence Cooperation (Secretary level). The 5th Annual Ministerial-level Annual Defence Dialogue was held on 11 October 2023 in Paris. The HCDC meeting was held in Paris in November 2021. Major ongoing defence-related projects include the purchase of Rafale aircrafts and the P-75 Scorpene Project. Other potential new areas of collaboration being pursued are co-development of next generation engines for fighter planes. An

office of DRDO has also been opened in the Embassy in 2023 for strengthening the technology cooperation between India and France.

20. India France joint defence exercises have grown in scope and complexity over the years. Bilateral Exercise VARUNA 2023 Phase 1 was conducted from 16-20 January 2023 off the Coast of Goa. The maiden Joint Military Exercise FRINJEX-23 between Indian Army and French Army was conducted from 7-8 March 2023 at Pangode Military Station in Kerala. Multilateral Exercise La Perouse was conducted in the Indian Ocean Region from 13-14 March 2023. Indian Navy, Royal Australian Navy, French Navy, Japanese Maritime Self Defence Force, Royal Navy and the US Navy participated in the exercise. Indian Air Force (IAF) participated for the first time in the multilateral Exercise ORION from 13 April to 07 May 2023. The exercise was conducted at the French Air and Space Force (FASF) base at Mont-de-Marsan.

21. Indian Defence Space Agency personnel visited France Space Command to attend ASTERX 2023 Space Exercise from 8-9 March 2023 as Military Observers. France participated in 'Aero-India' held from 13-17 February 2023 in Bangalore with a 10-members official delegation along with 27 French Defence Sector Companies.

22. There were several port calls during the year - INS Sindhuratna made an administrative port call at Le Havre from 6-9 March 2023 on its voyage back to India after a refit in Russia. INS Chennai made Port Call at Brest from 12-16 July 2023 during the French National Day on 14 July 2023. The Ambassador visited both INS Sindhuratna and Chennai during the port calls.

Trilateral Cooperation

23. Apart from bilateral dialogues, India and France also have separate trilateral institutional exchanges with Australia and UAE. The India-France-UAE Trilateral Focal Points meeting was held on 6 February 2023 in Paris.

The first Track 1.5 dialogue comprising parliamentarians, officials, former diplomats and think-tanks was held from 21-22 November 2023 in Paris. The second India-France-Australia Focal Points was held on June 20, 2023.

Foreign Office Consultations:

24. India and France regularly meet at the level of Foreign Secretary to review the bilateral relations. The last FoC was held in Paris in February 2023 and the next FOC is planned in the first quarter of 2024.

Space Cooperation

25. India and France have a rich history of cooperation in the field of space for over fifty years between ISRO and the French Space Agency, 'Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales' (CNES). France remains a major supplier of components and equipment for the Indian space programme.

26. The first India-France Strategic Space Dialogue was held in Paris on 26 June 2023 led by Foreign Secretary Mr Vinay Mohan Kwatra and Secretary General Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs Ms Anne-Marie Descôtes from Indian and French side respectively, identified areas for cooperation under the civil space cooperation and defense space cooperation tracks.

27. ISRO and CNES concluded a joint declaration for cooperation in future launch vehicle technologies and agreement for Cooperation in joint Earth Observation mission TRISHNA, Maritime Domain Awareness (Short-Term plan) and Space Situational Awareness. While ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) has launched French satellites on commercial basis, Arianespace, France has been the major provider of launch services to Indian Geo-Stationary satellites. Arianespace and NSIL concluded a Letter of Intent (LoI) for collaboration in commercial launch services.

Cyber Cooperation

28. India and France have Cyber Dialogue mechanism to discuss cyber cooperation and related matters. 4th Cyber Dialogue led by MEA on Indian side and MoFA on French side was held on 13 Oct 2021 and dates for the next are being worked out. A dialogue on cyber security matters was held in Paris on 9 Jan 2024.

Cooperation on Counter terrorism

29. India and France have robust cooperation on topics relating to countering terrorism in all its forms and manifestation, including under the UN forums. The 15th Meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counter terrorism was held in Paris on 16 Nov 2021 and the next meeting is scheduled to be held in January 2024 in new Delhi.

Civil Nuclear Cooperation

30. During PM's visit to Paris in July 2023, both leaders welcomed the progress made during discussions related to the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project (JNPP). It was also agreed to work on establishing a partnership on low and medium power modular reactors or Small Modular Reactors (SMR) and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMR). The cooperation on JNPP and exploration of SMRs and AMRs signifies a shared vision for sustainable and efficient nuclear energy solutions.

Economic Cooperation

31. France is one of the largest investors in India with FDI inflow of \$659.77 million for FY 2022-23 (as of June 2023) and a cumulative FDI stock of \$10.76 billion from April 2000 to September 2023. There are over 70 Indian

companies employing over 8000 employees in France. There are over 750 French companies invested in India employing over 450,000 people.

32. For the FY 2023-24 (till Aug 2023), Indian exports to France totaled \$3.06 billion and imports from France totaled \$2.36 billion. India's main exports to France include engineering goods including electrical machinery and boilers, petroleum products, pharmaceutical products, electronic equipment and ready made garment and main imports from France are aviation products, machine equipment, electrical equipment and chemical products.

33. Bilateral Joint Working Groups exist in various fields of, (i) IT & Tele-communications; (ii) Roads; (iii) Sustainable Urban Development; (iv) Agriculture and Food Processing; (v) Mineral Exploration and Development; and (vi) Energy.

34. The 16th JWG on Sustainable Urban Development took place in New Delhi on 16 January 2023. During the PM's Visit to Paris, 11th round of bilateral CEO Forum was held on 14 July 2023 and three areas were identified for joint cooperation - (i) Construction value chain, smart cities and urban improvement (ii) Green Hydrogen and Green Ammonia (iii) R&D in manufacturing including smart manufacturing.

Digital Cooperation

35. The Embassy of India in Paris along with French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs organized a workshop called 'INFRAStructures', on 8 May 2023 in Paris to showcase India's achievements in Public Digital Infrastructures and discuss about building secure and innovative digital commons. Mr Nandan Nilekani participated among other speakers.

36. 'India pavilion' was setup at 'VivaTech 2023', which is Europe's largest start-up and technology annual event, from 14-17 June 2023. Around 70

Indian start-ups from the fields of fintech, aerospace, healthcare, robotics and renewable energy, participated in the event. India was the 'Country of the Year' at VivaTech in 2022 and PM had delivered keynote address at VivaTech Digital Fair in 2021.

37. During PM's Visit to France from 13-14 July 2023, it was announced to launch Unified Payments Interface (UPI) from Eiffel Tower offering secure and convenient transactions for Indian visitors and NRIs.

38. C-DAC and M/S Atos, an European multinational IT service and consulting company based in France have developed 14 supercomputers for India to date including the fastest supercomputer Param Siddhi at 4.6 petaflops/second. Eviden, which is an Atos business, dealing with digital, cloud and big data & security won a \$100M contract with National Center for Medium Range Weather Forecast (NCMRWF), on behalf of the Ministry of Earth Sciences, in June 2023 to build two(2) new supercomputers on weather modelling and climate research for Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) and NCMRWF.

Culture and Tourism Cooperation

39. The Embassy organised cultural events and programs, throughout the year with local and India-based artists, in Paris and important cities around in France. The high point of the year was the Festival of India, 'Namaste France 2023' organized by Embassy of India in Paris with support of Ministry of Culture, Government of India at La Seine Musicale in Paris from 6-9 July 2023.

40. The festival brought together renowned Indian visual and performing artists - classical, modern and contemporary. It contributed to creating a strong public momentum in the build up to PM's Visit in July 2023, as the Guest of Honour for French National Day. The festival comprised 18 concerts,

16 workshops, 7 discussions, craft bazaar, tribal paintings exhibition, Rabari nomadic tribe photo exhibition and food court. The overall footfall was around 20,000 and the events were widely covered by online and print media with over 160 articles.

41. A Gala Dinner was organised as part of festival on 11 April 2023 for an invited audience of over 600 in presence of Mr Piyush Goyal, Minister of Commerce & Industry, and his French counterpart Mr. Olivier Becht. Among invitees were 25 French Parliamentarians, over 40 Indian and French CEOs, 40 Ambassadors, Presidents of Museums, think-tanks, academics, commentators, media representatives and community leaders. The event was also used to showcase India's diversity in performing art forms and cuisine.

42. Dr. Loganathan Murugan, Minister of State in the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting inaugurated the 'Indian Pavilion' at 76th Cannes Film Festival in May 2023. An Indian film festival was organised in collaboration with town of Saint Tropez in south of France in May 2023.

43. Two Letters of Intent, for Cooperation and Collaboration on Broadcasting between Prasar Bharati (PB) and France Media Monde (FMM) and on the New National Museum and Cooperation on Museology were signed during PM's Visit to France from 13-14 July 2023.

41. An 'India Pavillion' was setup at International and French Travel Market (IFTM) Top Resa tourism fair held from 3-5 Oct, 2023 in Paris with special focus on the States of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. A tourism event, attended by over 100 tour operators and 25 media personalities, to promote India's tourism products and facilitate discussions between stakeholders was held in India House on 24 October 2023.

42. During the visit of Prime Minister to France in July 2023, he had announced setting up of statue of Indian sage poet Thiruvalluvar near Paris. Ambassador on 9 December 2023, fulfilling the commitment made by PM, jointly unveiled the statue of Thiruvalluvar at the Francois Mitterand Park in Cergy town with its Mayor and President and members of Association Culturelle des Tamouls of Vaureal town which comes under Cergy. The 7.9 ft tall, 550 kg, statue was made by Sh V K Munusamy, a Padma Shri awarded sculptor from Puducherry.

Maritime Cooperation

43. The 6th Meeting of India-France Maritime Cooperation Dialogue was held from 26-27 October 2023 in Paris. Mr Vikram Misri, Deputy National Security Adviser led the Indian delegation and Ms Alice Rufo, Director General for International Relations and Strategy (DGRIS) led the French side.

44. As part of G7++Friends of Gulf of Guinea (GoG), Indian Naval warship 'Sumedha' was sent for patrol for 31 days. The inaugural India-EU joint naval exercises with warships of France, Spain and Italy was concluded in GoG on 24 Oct 2023.

Cooperation in the field of Blue Economy and Clean Energy

45. The first dialogue on Blue Economy was held on 12-13 October 2023 in Paris. Mr. BVR Subhramanyam, CEO, NITI Aayog and Mr. Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, Ambassador for Poles and Oceans led the Indian and French delegations respectively. Both side agreed that there exists significant potential for collaboration on capacity building, promotion of joint research and strengthening sustainable development of blue economy while respecting marine and coastal biodiversity.

46. The first International Energy Agency (IEA) Critical Minerals and Clean Energy Summit was held at the IEA Headquarter on 28 September 2023 in Paris. Mr. VL Kantha Rao, Secretary, Ministry of Mines led the Indian delegation. The Summit focused on measures to promote the secure, sustainable and responsible supply of raw materials that have a central role in the global clean energy transition.

Cooperation in the field of Science & Technology

47. A delegation led by Mr. S Chandrashekhar, Secretary Department of Science & Technology visited Paris and held various meetings from 04-05 May 2023 besides Co-chairing the 36th Governor Body Meeting of Indo-French Center for Promotion of Advanced Research (IFCPAR/CEFIPRA).

48. A Letter of Intent in the field of Health and Medicine and a MoU between the National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES), Chennai and Instiut Français de Recherche pour l'exploitation de la Mer (IFREMER) were signed during PM's Visit to France in July 2023.

Education Cooperation/Indian students/alumni in France:

49. It is estimated that there are about 10000 Indian students in France. The recent measures including offering of separate English medium courses for non-French speaking foreign students and relaxed visa-regimes are expected to draw more students in the coming years. An Agreement on mutual recognition of degrees was signed in 2018 to facilitate pursuit of higher education by Indian students in France and French students in India and increase their employability.

50. The Indo French Campus for Health was also launched in June 2022 to offer double degrees from Indian French Institutes. IN September 2022, India

and France agreed to launch scheme for Young Professionals in the age group 18 to 35 years.

51. The Migration Mobility Partnership Agreement was operationalized and APS-VIE Scheme (it allows Indian students to stay in France up to 2 yrs. after finishing Masters to look for jobs) was renewed, in Oct 2022. During PM's Visit in July 2023, it was agreed to increase the number of Indian students in France to 30,000 by 2030. During the visit France announced issuing of five year Schengen visa to Indian student alumni who have completed at least one semester of their Master's degree in France, a facility France announced for the first time for student alumni from any country.

Community in France

52. The mainland France has an estimated 1,19,000 Indian community (including NRIs) largely originating from erstwhile French colonies of Puducherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandernagore and the States of Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Punjab. As regard French Overseas Territories the estimated Indian origin population is - Reunion Island (3,00,159), Guadeloupe (57,180), Martinique (8,090) and Saint Martin (1950). There are over 50 Indian community organizations active in France.

53. Sh Jawed Ashraf, Ambassador of India to France visited Martinique (October 2023) and Guadeloupe (December 2023). During the visit he engaged with political, executive and civil authorities, business community and also Indian origin diaspora and community for strengthening the linkages between India and France, including its overseas territories. Prime Minister during his public address on 13 July 2023 had announced OCI card facility to people of Indian origin in Guadeloupe and Martinique. Ambassador had visited The Reunion Island, another French overseas territory in 2022.

54. India France Consular Dialogue was held in July 2020 and regular cooperation are under was between the two countries. The next dialogue is being planned to take place soon for strengthening the movement of people between the two countries.

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