

## **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 marked 25 years of India-France Strategic Partnership, when Prime Minister Modi paid an Official Visit from 13-14 July as the Guest of Honour at the French National Day. During the visit, both sides adopted 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, and centenary of India's independence.

4. Following Prime Minister's visit, President of the French Republic H.E. Mr. Emmanuel Macron paid a State Visit to India as the Chief Guest for the 75th Republic Day of India on 25-26 January 2024. This was President Macron's second State Visit to India and the sixth visit by a French Leader as Guest of Honour for the Republic Day. For the two leaders to be the Guests of Honour at the successive National days respectively, was unprecedented and a high point in the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the declaration of the Strategic Partnership between the two countries.

### **High-level Political Exchanges**

5. Both leaders have used the opportunities of multilateral summits to meet regularly and reviewed the progress of bilateral relations, in particular, the Horizon 2047 Roadmap, agreed between the two sides in July 2023. On 18 November 2024, both leaders met on the sidelines

of G20 Summit in Brazil. On 14 June 2024, Prime Minister Modi held a bilateral meeting with President Macron on the sidelines of G7 Summit in Italy. Earlier to this meeting, President Macron made a congratulatory phone call to Prime Minister Modi on 06 June 2024, after the latter's re-election as Prime Minister of India.

**Other high-level interactions in the past include:**

6. There have been a series of high-level exchanges between the two sides, with discussions centering around bilateral issues and mutual global concerns, reflecting the increasing strategic convergence between the two countries. In the run-up to the State visit, Diplomatic Advisor to the French President Mr. Emmanuel Bonne paid a visit to New Delhi on 12 January 2024, and met with National Security Advisor (NSA) Shri Ajit Doval, EAM Dr. Jaishankar and Finance Minister Smt Nirmala Sitharaman.

7. On 30 September 2024, NSA co-chaired the 37<sup>th</sup> India-France Strategic Dialogue with Diplomatic Advisor Bonne in Paris. During the visit, NSA also met French Foreign Minister Jean Noel Barrot, Minister of Armed Forces Sebastien Lecornu and called on President Macron.

8. On 26 January 2024, EAM met with Mr. Stephane Sejourne, the then Foreign Minister of France, and held a discussion on a range of regional and global issues. The latter made a congratulatory phone call to EAM on 21 June 2024, congratulating the latter on his re-appointment as External Affairs Minister of India. EAM met with the new French Foreign Minister Mr. Jean Noel Barrot on 24 September 2024, on the sidelines of UN General Assembly in New York and on 25 November 2024, on the sidelines of Rome Mediterranean Dialogue 2024.

9. 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.

10. Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman met French Minister of Economy, Finance and Industry Mr. Antoine Armand on the sidelines of the World Bank and IMF annual meeting 2024, in Washington DC on 24 October 2024.

11. Minister of State, Commerce & Industry Mr. Jitin Prasada met with French Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade Ms. Sophie Primas on 25 October 2024 on the sidelines of G20 Trade and Industrial Ministers' Meeting in Brazil.

12. Ms Sophie Primas, Minister Delegate for Foreign Trade and French Nationals Abroad, visited India from 27-29 November 2024, and met Shri Piyush Goyal, Hon'ble Minister of

Commerce and Industry of India, after which both Ministers opened the France-India CEOs Forum concluding session, where Minister Goyal read Prime Minister's message to the Asia Pacific Forum 2024 and the 12th round of the bilateral CEO Forum, which were being held simultaneously in New Delhi. The events focused on business opportunities and collaboration between Indian and French companies in India and Indo-Pacific region.

## **Defence Cooperation**

13. 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.

14. India France joint defence exercises have grown in scope and complexity over the years. The 20<sup>th</sup> edition of Army to Army Staff Talks was held between India and France at Delhi from 07-08 November 2024. The 17<sup>th</sup> round of Navy to Navy Staff Talks was held at New Delhi from 06-07 February 2024. Bilateral Army Exercise - SHAKTI 2024 was conducted from 13 to 26 May 2024 at Umroi, Meghalaya, in India. This was the first time that the exercise saw participation of Air force and Navy observers. French Air and Space Force (FASF) and IAF have been participating in bi-lateral Ex GARUDA till last year in 2023. This year the IAF expanded the scope by inviting multiple nations in the form of a new exercise TARANG SHAKTI in lieu of Ex GARUDA. FASF participated in this multilateral Ex Tarang Shakti Phase -I held at Air Force Station Suler and Air Force Station Thanjavur from from 06 - 14 August 24. Sea Phase of naval exercise VARUNA 2024 was conducted from 02 - 05 September 24 off the Coast of Toulon, France. IN P8I (Maritime Patrol and Recce Aircraft) was deployed at Istres (France) from 01 - 04 September 2024 to take part in Exercise VARUNA 2024. French Aircraft Atlantique 2 participated in the multilateral exercise MILAN 2024, off the coast of Vishakapatnam.

15. A letter of Intent (LoI) on deepening the Defense Space partnership was signed on 26 January 2024 between India and France, which is a testimony to the increasing strategic co-operation in the field of Space along with Defence. One member delegation from Defence Space Agency participated as military observer in the AsterX-24 exercise from 03 Mar to 06 Mar 24 at Toulouse, France. As a sign of increasing trust the status of participation has now been enhanced from Observer to a Participant for the upcoming exercise in March 2025.

16. There were several port calls during the year. INS Tabar made Port Call at Toulon from 29 Aug to 02 Sep 24. The port call also included the harbour phase of Ex VARUNA 2024. INS Talwar made OTR at La Reunion from 27 to 29 October 2024.

### **Trilateral Cooperation**

17. India and France have a robust ongoing cooperation with third countries, including trilateral institutional exchanges with Australia and UAE, respectively. The 3<sup>rd</sup> India-France-Australia Trilateral Focal Points Meeting took place on 19 June 2024 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> India-France-UAE Trilateral Focal Points Meeting took place on 09 July 2024.

### **Foreign Office Consultations:**

18. India and France regularly meet at the level of Foreign Secretary to review the bilateral relations. The last FoC was held in Paris in on 20 January 2024.

### **Space Cooperation**

19. India and France have a rich history of cooperation in the field of space for over sixty 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. Ongoing cooperation activities include joint satellite mission TRISHNA, maritime domain awareness system, payload accommodation, ground station support, human spaceflight and professional exchange. ISRO has been using the launch services of Arianespace for launching its heavier communication satellites on commercial basis.

20. The second India-France Strategic Space Dialogue was held at New Delhi on 04 March 2024, led by Foreign Secretary Shri Vinay Kwatra on the Indian side and by Secretary General, Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Ms. Anne-Marie Descôtes on the French side. Both sides reviewed progress made since the first India-France Strategic Space Dialogue and discussed the ongoing robust bilateral engagement in the space sector and avenues for further cooperation in the G2G and commercial segments, as well as the implementation of the Letter of Intent on Defence Space Cooperation, capacity building and training, space exchanges and defence space industrial cooperation.

### **Cyber Cooperation**

21. 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 planned in the year 2025. A dialogue on cyber security matters was held in Paris on 9 Jan 2024.

## **Cooperation on Counter terrorism**

22. India and France have robust cooperation on topics relating to countering terrorism in all its forms and manifestation, including under the UN forums. The 16th Meeting of the Joint Working Group on Counter terrorism was held in Paris in January 2024.

## **Civil Nuclear Cooperation**

23. India and France have cooperation on the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, notably in relation with the Jaitapur Nuclear Power Plant Project. The first meeting of special task force on nuclear energy in the framework of the Indo-French Strategic Dialogue, was convened on 20 January 2025. Both sides have 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**

24. Within the European Union, France remains India's fifth-largest trading partner, following the Netherlands, Belgium, Italy, and Germany. Discussions during various high-level visits in 2024 focused on trade, technological advancements, energy security, and cultural exchanges, reflecting a commitment to deepening ties for mutual economic growth and global leadership. France considers India an important market for its products and is looking to increase the number of joint ventures and encouraging investments in and from India. Both countries are also moving to jointly develop technologies and integrate existing technologies. The process of enabling Unified Payment Interface (**UPI**) has been a success. Several Indian companies have opened their innovation centres in France for joint technology development including TCS and L&T Tech Service. French technologies especially in renewables, sustainable manufacturing and urban infrastructure development are being integrated in India.

25. India and France prioritized five key areas for economic diplomacy in 2024:

- a) Advancing digital technology and innovation.
- b) Clean Energy Collaborations
- c) Research and Development, Smart Manufacturing, and Critical Technologies, including defence
- d) Enhancing India's exports to France.

## e) Global Supply Chain Relocation Initiatives

26. For the year 2024-25, from April 2024 to October 2024 Indian exports to France amounted to USD 4.69 Billion. The bilateral trade between India and France has more than doubled in the last decade to USD 15.11 Billion in 2023-24 from USD 6.4 Billion in 2009-10.

27. France is the 11th largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative investment of USD 10.94 billion (INR 68,980.73 Crore) from April 2000 to March 2024 which represents 1.61% of the total FDI inflows into India according to data provided by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). Top 5 FDI Equity Inflows are in: Services sector (17.87%), Cement & gypsum products (8.91%), Air transport (including air freight) (7.31%), Miscellaneous industries (7.04%) and Petroleum & natural gas (6.81%). These five sectors represent 47.93% of the total equity inflow from France from April 2000 to March 2024.

28. Several events were held in France to strengthen trade, investment, and technology ties between the two countries, including promotion of Indian fashion and Indian textiles, round-table conference on 'Opportunities in India's first International Financial Services Centre at GIFT City, Gujarat', round-table conferences with CEOs of major French companies in construction, automobile, education, infrastructure, logistics and technology, UPI and digital infrastructure.

### **Digital Cooperation**

29. During PM's visit to Paris in July 2023, NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) and France's Lyra Collect executed an agreement to implement Unified Payment Interface (UPI) in France and Europe. The payment mechanism went live at the Eiffel Tower during President Macron's visit to India on 26 January 2024, as the first merchant in France to accept UPI. Subsequently, UPI payments were launched at Galleries Lafayette on July 3, 2024. The payment option would soon be made available at all Galleries Lafayette stores across France.

30. With a shared belief in the power of a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) approach for the development of open, free, democratic and inclusive digital economies and digital societies, India and France have advanced multi-stakeholder exchanges through the InFrastructures (India France Structures) and InFinity (India France Innovation in Information Technology) platforms. Additionally, a half day session on DPI for 45 French Civil Servants was organized in 2024.

31. As part of the joint DPI cooperation efforts, India and France have mutually identified potential high-impact initiatives in the areas of mobility, commerce and culture, as initial focus areas to showcase the significant benefits of interconnectedness between platforms accomplished by leveraging open protocols.

## **Tourism**

32. An 'India Pavillion' was set up at the International and French Travel Market (IFTM) Top Resa tourism fair held from 17-19 September 2024 in Paris. There were state pavilions from Kerala, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka and Uttar Pradesh tourism boards.

## **Culture Cooperation**

33. 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.

34. The 4-day 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.

35. 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.

36. Dr. Loganathan Murugan, Minister of State in the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Ministry of Information and Broadcasting inaugurated the 'Indian Pavillion' 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.

37. 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.

38. 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.

### **Cooperation in the field of Blue Economy and Clean Energy**

39. As a follow up on the decisions taken during first bilateral held in October 2023 in Paris, India-France follow up dialogue on Blue Economy and Ocean Governance was held on 21st February 2024 in NITI Aayog, New Delhi. The Indian delegation was led by Shri B.V.R Subhramanyam, CEO, NITI Aayog and the French delegation was led by Mr. Olivier Poivre d'Arvor, Ambassador for Poles and Maritime Issues. During the follow up discussions both sides reviewed and identified the status of the collaboration areas.

### **Cooperation in Environment**

40. The fourth meeting of Indo-French Joint Working Group on Environment was held on 10 July 2024. Recalling the richness of the bilateral cooperation in environment, climate change, biodiversity and pollution, the sides agreed to work under the Blue Economy Dialogue in the areas of coastal ecosystem and services, marine and coastal planning and in coastal ecology and environment.

### **Cooperation in the field of Science & Technology**

41. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Science & Technology Committee was held on 18<sup>th</sup> January 2024. Broadly the topics discussed for the 2nd Joint Committee Meeting include: (i) Energy: Green Hydrogen, Energy conservation and storage, (ii) climate change and sustainable cities: Carbon capture and utilization and storage technologies, sequestration, (iii) Digital Technologies: AI for sustainability, Autonomous navigation, (iv) Quantum Technology: Quantum computing, sensing and metrology, materials and devices, (v) Health: Cancer research and innovations, novel therapeutics, novel diagnostics for early detection of emerging diseases, AI application in Healthcare, host-pathogen interactions of emerging infectious diseases etc. (vi) Oceans, and (vi) Applied Mathematics.

42. A delegation led by Secretary, DST held various bilateral meetings with the French institutions working in science and technology and also Co-chaired the **37<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Governing Body of CEFIPRA** (Indo-French Center for Promotion of Advanced Research ) **on 25 April 2024, in Paris**. During the meeting, both sides raised the funding by euro 0.45 million each taking total to euro 4 million per year funding to the bilateral center.

43. Another outcome which the Governing Board approved was launching of **India-France Virtual Node on Health Issues (ILBS-INSERM)** with budget of Rs.35 lakhs (Euro 39.000) per



year for three years). Under this initiative, both sides launched Indo-French Node “Liver & Metabolic Disease Network (InFLiMeN)” which was inaugurated by Hon’ble Minister of State for Science and Technology Dr. Jitendra Singh on 04 July 2024 at **Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences ( ILBS )**, New Delhi.

44. An **MoU between DST and ANR France was signed** during the 2<sup>nd</sup> Joint Committee Meeting on 18 January 2024 in New Delhi. Proposed funding from each side would be euro 1 million. Two areas selected for the calls under this MoU are: (i)Decarbonated Hydrogen (ii) Applied Mathematics towards digital AI.

### **Community in France and Indian Students/ Alumni in France**

45. There is a large presence of Indian diaspora in French mainland and its overseas territories. There are an estimated 1,19,000 Indian community in mainland France, largely originating from erstwhile French colonies of Puducherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandernagore and the States of Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and Punjab. The estimated Indian origin population in French Overseas Territories is-Reunion Island (3,00,159), Guadeloupe (57,180), Martinique (8,090) and Saint Martin (1950). There are over 50 Indian community organisations active in France.

46. There had been a long-standing request from the Indian-origin communities in Guadeloupe and Martinique for registration under the scheme of Overseas Citizen of India, which has been granted through a notification dated 11 July 2024 from Ministry of Home Affairs of India. This was announced by Ambassador of India to France Shri Jawed Ashraf during his visit to the islands on 20-21 August 2024.

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