

Embassy of India
France
India- France Bilateral Relations

INDIA- FRANCE BILATERAL RELATIONS

India and France have 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 the 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).

The two countries have a burgeoning economic relationship. French businesses and industry have forged linkages with the Indian economy and contribute significantly to our goal to become an Atmanirbhar Bharat. In addition, there exists 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.

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. On 16 November 2022 President Macron and Prime Minister had a meeting at the sidelines of the G20 Summit in Bali, Indonesia. On 4 May 2022, Prime Minister made a stop-over in Paris on his way back from Denmark to meet President Macron, thus becoming the first world leader to meet President Macron after he won his second term on 17 April 2022. They also briefly met on the sidelines of the G7 Summit at Schloss Elmau in Germany on 27 June 2022. Before this, on 30 October 2021, Hon'ble Prime Minister met French President Emmanuel Macron on the sidelines of the G20 Summit and held wide-ranging discussions on bilateral and global issues. Both leaders have also exchanged telephonically on numerous occasions to discuss issues of common interest.

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. It was followed by a joint-statement. 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. 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. Earlier, PM had 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.

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

S.No.	Date of Visit	Details
1	June 15, 2022	Minister of Railways, Communications and Electronics & Information Technology Sh. Ashwini Vaishnaw, visited Paris to participate in VivaTech 2022- Europe’s largest Tech event, where India was the Country of the Year
2	May 17-18, 2022	Minister of Information and Broadcasting Sh. Anurag Thakur led a delegation to Cannes for the Annual Cannes Film Festival from where India was the ‘Country of Honor’

3	February 20-24 ,2022	EAM Dr S. Jaishankar visited France for Bilateral meetings
4	November 11-12, 2019	EAM Dr. S. Jaishankar visited Paris and held Bilateral meetings.
5	October 23- 24, 2019	MoS External Affairs Shri V. Muraleedharan visited Reunion island 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.
6	October 07- 10, 2019	Raksha Mantri Shri Rajnath Singh visited France for the 2nd edition of the Defence Dialogue with the French Minister of Armed Forces Ms. Florence Parly.
7	November 10-11, 2018	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 in Paris. He inaugurated the memorial for fallen Indian soldiers at Villiers Guislan.

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 11th largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative FDI stock of USD 9.83 billion from April 2000 to March 2021, 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. Seventeen investments from India were recorded in 2018, creating or maintaining 141 jobs.

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 2020-March 2021, India-France bilateral trade stood at USD 7.86 billion. India’s exports to France were valued at USD 5.6 billion, down by 22.9%. Meanwhile, French exports to India decreased by 20.95% during the same period to USD 5.1 billion. 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 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 which was to be made operational by the end of December 2020. The first meetings were held on 16 February 2022 between E/I, Paris and the French Treasury and 25 February 2022 between Secretary, DPIIT and the French Ambassador, in Paris and Delhi, respectively.

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

Commerce and Industries Minister Shri Piyush Goyal also held a virtual conference for French businesses in February 2021, whereby a dedicated desk was set up by Invest India for investor queries. In recent interactions at the EU level, India has sought an early harvest trade agreement, while working towards a comprehensive FTA. On 10 March 2022, French Minister of State for Trade and Commercial Attractiveness paid a visit to India and called on CIM. He also held meetings with Indian and French industry leaders during his visit.

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 for 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 2021 in France), Exercise Varuna (Navy; Last conducted in Arabian Sea from 30th March to 3rd April 2022), Exercise Garuda (Air Force; November 2022 in India). 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. The defence equipment purchase and joint development is key aspect of the partnership, of which purchase of 36 Rafale aircrafts and contract for six P-75 Scorpenes Project are most visible examples.

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, recently GSAT-24 communication satellite of New Space India Ltd (NSIL) was successfully launched on-board Ariane-5 from Kourou, French Guiana. France continues to be a major supplier of components and equipment for the Indian space programme. CNES is supporting Indian human space flight programme – Gaganyaan, in the field of space medicine and supply of crew support elements. The IA was signed during French Foreign Minister's visit to India on 15 April 2021.

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. Both the countries are working to conclude technical and financial matters for an early conclusion of this important project.

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.

India is also part of the Jules Horowitz Reactor (JHR), a materials testing and research reactor being constructed in Cadarache, France.

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 5th ISA Assembly held in October 2022 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.

French Minister of Ecological Transition held a five-day visit to India from 28 January- 02 February 2021. A key outcome of her visit was 2021-22 being celebrated as Indo French year of Environment. AFD and SECI signed a letter of intent for developing 150 MW floating solar power system.

On 6 October 2021, the National Thermal Power Corporation and the French electricity agency EDF (Electricité de France) signed an MoU to work on clean energy projects in Europe, Asia, West Asia and Africa and to collaborate on R&D, technical services and consultancy assignments on a global scale.

India and France also work together on climate and biodiversity. In this context, India joined the French-led initiative called the High Ambition Coalition for Nature and People, on 7 October 2021.

At the One Ocean Summit on 11 February 2022, Prime Minister announced India's support to the French initiative of the High Ambition Coalition on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) that calls for a legally binding BBNJ Treaty by the end of 2022. PM also expressed India's readiness to work with France on a global initiative on combatting single-use plastic pollution.

During the visit of The Minister of State for Development, Francophonie and International Partnerships of France, Ms Chrysoula Zacharopoulou to India on October 18, 2022 the "Indo-French Roadmap on the Development of Green Hydrogen" was adopted. Ms Chrysoula Zacharopoulou and Shri R.K. Singh, Minister of Power, New and Renewable Energy, Government of India adopted the Roadmap.

Cooperation in the fields of S&T and Education

India and France have a rich history of cooperation in the field of Science and Technology. The Inter-Governmental Agreement for Cooperation in the field of Science and Technology was signed between the two countries on 18 July 1978. The cooperation has evolved since then and several linkages have been forged between Ministries / departments / institutes/ organizations on both sides.

Many 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.

Apart from the aforementioned, India joined OECD-Committee on Scientific and Technology Policy (CSTP) and its associated working parties including NESTI (National Experts on Science and Technology Indicators) as a "full participant" country in Feb 2020.

An important development in the field of S&T cooperation was the signing of the agreement to establish a Joint India-France Science and Technology Committee on 25 January 2016 in New Delhi.

During the visit of Prime Minister Modi to France in April 2015, the two sides decided to facilitate professional experience for their students in both countries after the completion of their academic courses. 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 Entreprises) 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 Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, Ms. Catherine Colonna, India and France agreed to launch scheme for Young Professionals in the age group 18 to 35 years (issue of 500 visas on both sides). On S&T following 2 MoUs were signed with CNRS by DST and DBT to augment the Indo-French S&T Cooperation – (a) MoU between DST & CNRS for scientific cooperation in frontier areas of mutual interest and (b) DBT – CNRS MoU to establish National Institute of Marine Biology and Biotechnology in India.

During the visit of President Macron to India (March 2018), the two sides encouraged their respective Universities and academic institutes to increase the number and quality of student exchanges with the aim of reaching the number of 10,000 students by 2020. Having reached this target, during the visit of PM to France (August 2019), the two sides revised the student exchange target to 20,000 by 2025. During this latter visit, an Administrative Arrangement was also signed between the two countries for Cooperation in Skill Development and Vocational Training.

During EAM's visit to France in February 2022, the two sides adopted the India- France Roadmap on Blue Economy and Ocean Governance. An Indian delegation comprising of officials from the NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Earth Sciences, visited Paris on 13 June 2022 to participate in the "Preparatory meeting of the Blue Economy and Ocean governance Dialogue between India and France", held at the Headquarters of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The India France Knowledge Summit is a bilateral forum dedicated to scientific and academic cooperation between France and India. The first edition was organized in New Delhi in March 2018, during the visit of President Emmanuel Macron. The second edition took place in Lyon on October 2019 and brought together more than 400 participants. The third edition was hosted in an online format in November 2021 in Pune.

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 6G, developing global tech standards, training and capacity building programs and connecting the start up ecosystems of the two countries.

The fourth India-France Cyber Dialogue was held on 13 October 2021 in the virtual mode. The Indian side proposed an Action Plan which is under consideration at the French side.

India participated at the 6th edition of VivaTech – Europe's largest Technology and Startup event, held from 15 to 18 June 2022, as the First ever Country of the Year. Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Hon'ble Minister of Communications and Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) and Minister of Railways visited the event on its first day on June 15, 2022. Prime Minister had earlier given the keynote address, virtually, at the 5th Edition of Vivatech, in June 2021.

Previously, InFinity or India France Innovation in Information Technology Summit was launched by the Embassy of India, Paris with its first edition being organized on November 24-25, 2021 which brought together Governments, corporates, technology stakeholders and

startups on a virtual platform to connect and discuss to cover three broad themes of Digital sovereignty, advanced technologies and associated regulatory and policy issues and leveraging technologies for social progress, economic transformation and a green and sustainable future. Thereafter in April 2022, the Embassy of India, in association with French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organized a workshop on April 8, 2022 under the theme ‘[IN][FRA]Structures – Workshop to build secure and innovative digital commons’, which brought together over 100 representatives from Governments, startups, developers and think tanks participated and agreed to many projects in the fields of Healthcare, Education, Financial Services, Public services and Identity. An MoU to continue InFra workshop annually was signed during VivaTech

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, 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. There are many Indo-French cultural associations which organizes various events across France. Indian diaspora through diverse community associations celebrate Diwali, Holi, Pongal, Onam, Lohri etc and regularly organises cultural programs. An Indian Cultural Centre, named Shri Vivekananda Cultural Centre, is currently under renovation which will soon be opened in Paris.

Every year at the famous “Cannes Film Festival” a large Indian delegation participates to promote Indian films at the international stage. This year, India was the Country of Honour at the Cannes Film Festival. India has a film co-production agreement with France. Yoga and Ayurveda are also quite popular in France. “International Day of Yoga” (IDY) is celebrated across France with much enthusiasm. Indian Embassy celebrates IDY across France in collaboration with different Yoga institutions with a participation of more than 10,000 people across France. Many renowned museums like Louvre Museum, Guimet Museum have as large collection of Indian artefacts and they regularly hosts Indian artists who are also supported by ICCR. Indian diaspora and cultural associations in past, have celebrated 150th Birth anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi, and 550th Birth anniversary of Gurunanak Devji across France. In 2021-22 in order to celebrate 75 years of India’s Independence more than 100 events across France were organised.

As decided during the visit of President Hollande to India in January 2016, ICCR presented the Namaste France cultural festival in France from 15 September to 30 November 2016. The French side presented the French cultural festival Bonjour India in India from November 2017 to February 2018. The next edition of Namaste France will be held in 2023. India was the Country of Honour for the 2022 edition of the Paris International Book Fair (Livre Paris, June 2022) while France will be the Guest of Honour at

the World Book Fair, New Delhi in its next edition. France and India have an ongoing cooperation on museums as well.

Indian community in France

It is estimated that the Indian community, including NRIs in mainland France number around 109,000, largely originating from French enclaves of Puducherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandernagore. Sizeable number of Indian origin population lives in the French Overseas Territories of the Reunion Island (280,000), Guadeloupe (60,000), Martinique (6,000) and Saint Martin (300). 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, with close links with former French colonies of Puducherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandernagore. There has also been an increasing number of students (nearly 10,000) and professionals studying and working in mainland France.

Consular issues

Bilateral consular relations are guided by the following five 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)
- Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement (October 2021)

During the visit of President Macron to India (March 2018), the two sides signed a Migration and Mobility Partnership Agreement which aims to facilitate temporary circular migration based on mobility and the encouragement for a return of skills to the home country. The Agreement came into effect on 1 October 2021. During the visit of PM to France (August 2019), the two sides decided to initiate a regular Consular Dialogue. First Consular Dialogue was held in July 2020 through virtual mode.

Source: Embassy of India, France Web site Jan 2023.