

India-France Relations: Horizon 2047

Why in News?

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Key Highlights

- PM was invited to be the chief guest at the Bastille Day parade - it saw Indian tri-service participation - and was the second time that an Indian Prime Minister has been extended the invitation (Manmohan Singh was the first in 2009).
- Important one among the agreements was the strategic road map for the next 25 years - "Horizon 2047" — which includes cooperation in **defence, space, nuclear energy, climate change and green transitions** as well as **education and people-to-people ties**.
- Another road map was released on **how to cooperate further in the Indo-Pacific region**, which includes military and naval exchanges and a trilateral development fund to help countries in the region.
- There were also the decisions, in principle, to buy **26 more Rafale fighter jets off-the-shelf (Rafale-M)**, this time for the Indian Navy; **three more Scorpene submarines** in continuation to the purchases of 2008, and an agreement between **Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Safran for helicopter engines**.

Something special

India's relationship with France is unique and multidimensional

Celebrating 25 years of the India-France strategic partnership was at the top of the agenda during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's two-day visit to France and his meetings with French President Emmanuel Macron last week, which ended with a number of agreements and a slew of defence deals. Mr. Modi's visit, just months before Mr. Macron is in Delhi for the G-20 summit, was a special one, as he was invited to be the chief guest at the Bastille Day parade – it saw Indian tri-service participation – and was the second time that an Indian Prime Minister has been extended the invitation (Manmohan Singh was the first in 2009). Chief among the agreements was the strategic road map for the next 25 years – "Horizon 2047" – which includes cooperation in defence, space, nuclear energy, climate change and green transitions as well as education and people-to-people ties. Another road map was released on how to cooperate further in the Indo-Pacific region, which includes military and naval exchanges and a trilateral development fund to help countries in the region. There were also the decisions, in principle, to buy 26 more Rafale fighter jets off-the-shelf (Rafale-M), this time for the Indian Navy; three more Scorpene submarines in continuation to the purchases of 2008, and an agreement between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Safran for helicopter engines.

In the broader picture, the France-India strategic relationship is built on a respect for each other's strategic autonomy. France has remained steadfast in its refusal to comment on India's internal affairs or its foreign policy choices. While France has taken a leading role in the western pushback to Russia's war in Ukraine, it has not joined other western countries in publicly exhorting India to change its stand. In 1974, and in 1998, France did not join the western push to sanction India for its nuclear tests either; it even stepped in with uranium supplies to power the Tarapur reactors. Mr. Modi's visit was also at around the same time that the European Parliament decided to adopt a resolution criticising his government for the violence in Manipur and al-

India, France and what keeps their ties ticking

In 1998, India put France in what should have been a tough spot. Just a few months after French President Jacques Chirac had been the chief guest at the Republic Day Parade in Delhi, and Prime Minister I.K. Gujral signed India's first ever Strategic Partnership agreement with him, newly elected Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee announced that nuclear tests had been conducted in Pokhran (Pokhran-I), in May. In the United Nations (UN) Security Council, French diplomats joined the P-5 countries in condemning the tests, but did not join (along with the United Kingdom and Russia) the United States-led move to impose sanctions on India. Nor did France scrap the Strategic Partnership Agreement.

The philosophy behind the relationship Throughout their relationship, New Delhi and Paris have built a tradition of joining each other's national day parades – Chirac himself was guest at India's Republic Day twice (his first appearance was in 1970). Valéry Giscard d'Estaing (1980), Nicolas Sarkozy (2008) and Francois Hollande (2016) have been guests since. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh (2009) and now Prime Minister Narendra Modi were invited to the Bastille Day parade. While the purchase of defence equipment often overshadows the outcome of any of these big visits, it is the underlying philosophy of their engagement that propels India and France ties forward. Both countries have held on to three pillars in the relationship: non-interference in each other's internal affairs, a steadfast belief in strategic autonomy as expressed by President Charles De Gaulle, and non-alignment, as expressed by Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, and a refusal to pull the other into its own coalitions and alliances.

The awkwardness in 1998, after all, would have been nothing in comparison to Chirac's visit to India in 1976. Not six months before that, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi had declared the Emergency, and suspended freedoms in a move that was criticised across the world. But Chirac, who was the Prime Minister of France, saw no reason to cancel his visit. In December 1975, France had hosted the "Paris Conference on International Economic Co-operation", that looked at the impact of the global energy crisis on developing countries that rose from U.S.-Arab tensions over the Yom Kippur war. India was one of a few invitees to the preparatory committee of



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the conference. When Chirac was in Delhi in January, he praised India's role in bringing disparate global positions together. Space, nuclear energy and defence were, even then, the cornerstones of the relationship. In 2006, Chirac returned to Delhi, to lay the stage for the civil nuclear deal. When India won its waiver at the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2008, it was France (it had done much of the heavy lifting for the waiver), and not the U.S., that India signed its first civil nuclear deal with.

Writing about his decisions in his memoirs, Chirac, who confessed a "youthful love and passion" for India and a teenage attempt at learning Sanskrit, said that for him the Strategic Partnership was "a means of establishing the primary role that India, by reason of its history, democratic choices, attachment to secularism, coexistence of different peoples, languages, and cultures, was called on to play in the aim of creating a more equally balanced world" (Chirac, Jacques, *My Life in Politics*, p.212).

Mr. Modi's visit to Paris last week saw many of the same shades of the partnership: India's Foreign Secretary Vinay Koirala pointed out that despite the dramatic visuals of violent protests across France last month over the mistreatment of immigrant communities, Mr. Modi had not hesitated even once in planning his visit. Neither did France bring up the European Parliament's criticism of India over the violence in Manipur, or allegations of human rights violations, intolerance towards minorities and curbing civil society freedoms – these were referred to in the resolution adopted by Member of the European Parliament at the plenary session in Strasbourg during July 10-13, and on the day Mr. Modi landed in France.

The Ukraine war On a major geopolitical stage, this combination of non-interference and non-alliances plays into France's approach towards the Narendra Modi government's position on the war in Ukraine. In March 2022, a month into this war, France co-authored a UN Security Council resolution with Mexico that sought to ensure unhindered humanitarian aid be allowed inside the conflict zone. Two rounds of negotiations followed, with hopes in particular of winning over countries such as India, given the humanitarian issue. The resolution was eventually brought to the UN General Assembly when that effort failed, but no

word of disappointment was expressed by Paris when India abstained there. Through the war, President Emmanuel Macron's own stance has been more complex than that of other western countries – even risking ridicule over the seven to eight extended calls he made to Russian President Vladimir Putin and a visit to Moscow in an attempt to talk Mr. Putin out of the war.

More recently, Mr. Macron suggested he would travel to South Africa for the BRICS summit in August, if invited, to make his case there. Understanding and sharing some of the complexity with which they view the world, New Delhi did not have differences with France over Mr. Macron's visit to China in April this year, including his statement that Europe cannot be a "vassal state" to the U.S. on its China policy.

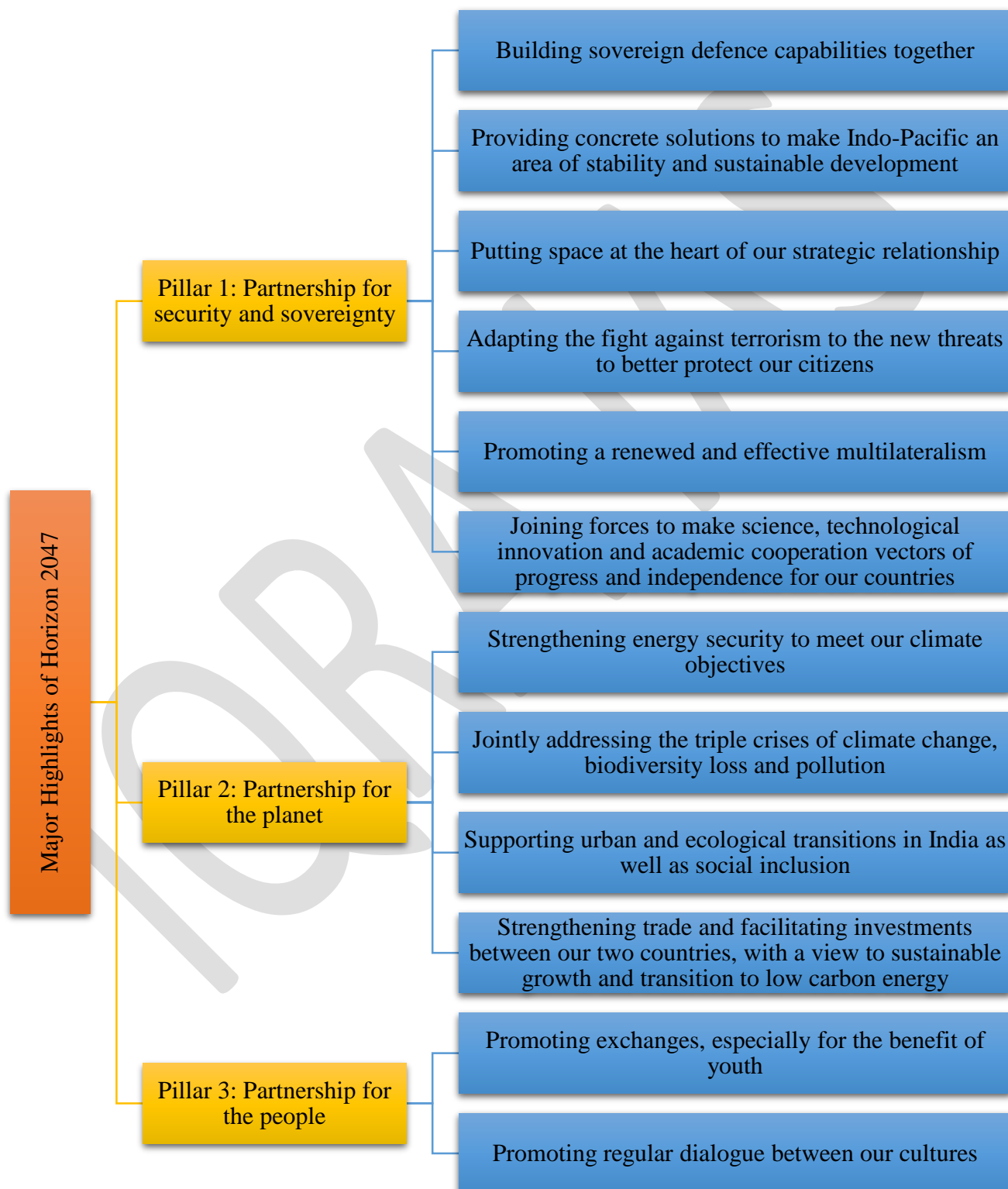
Strategic partnerships In the strategic sphere, France announced publicly that it disapproves of a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) plus partnership plans, that would see the Trans-Atlantic alliance build direct ties with Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and even India. New Delhi had already rejected the plan – External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has said that NATO "is not a template that applies to India". As a result, despite a push from several countries, the NATO Summit in Vilnius this month dropped a mention of the project. The India-France Roadmap on the Indo-Pacific released last week further clarifies that neither side is attempting to pull the other into its other regional military coalitions. France was cool to plans for "Quad Plus" coalitions, first floated in 2020, which were more or less dropped after the U.S.-France rift over the AUKUS agreement (the U.S., the U.K. and Australia). France is also the only country the Indian Navy has conducted joint patrols with so far, and future plans could involve the use of French international territories in Reunion, New Caledonia and French Polynesia, and even India's Andaman Islands, for port calls and reconnaissance by both navies on a bilateral basis.

While India's ties with each of the P-5 countries is unique, the feature that sets apart the India-France relationship is this – geopolitics sans value judgements, and no pressure to align their positions.

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India and France are long-standing strategic partners in the Indo-Pacific. Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1947, and the upgrading of the partnership to the strategic level in 1998, our two countries have consistently acted together, building on a high level of mutual trust, shared commitment to the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and common values rooted in international law.



Pillar 1: Partnership for Security and Sovereignty

- **Building Sovereign Defence Capabilities Together**
 - ✓ Industrial cooperation for motorization of heavy-lift helicopters under the Indian Multi Role Helicopter [IMRH] programme with Safran Helicopter Engine, France.
 - This is also reflective of the French commitment to support technology transfer and Make in India.
 - ✓ India and France hail the success of the first Scorpene submarine construction programme (P75 – Kalvari), a model of Make in India and the sharing of naval expertise between companies in the two countries.
 - ✓ MoU between Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Ltd. (GRSE), and Naval Group France, a leader in European Naval Defence Industry to collaborate in the field of surface ship that caters to fulfil the requirement of India and International Naval forces.
 - ✓ In view of the uptick in defence industrial collaborations between the two countries, India is setting up a Technical Office of the DRDO at its Embassy in Paris.
- **Providing Concrete Solutions to Make Indo-Pacific an Area of Stability and Sustainable Development**
 - ✓ India and France are determined to strengthen the cooperation initiated under the Joint Strategic Vision of India-France Cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region adopted in 2018 and have therefore adopted a new Indo-Pacific Roadmap. They are committed to work together to
 - Secure their own economic and security interests;
 - Ensure equal and free access to global commons;
 - Build partnerships of prosperity and sustainability in the region thanks to common development action;
 - Advance the rule of international law;
 - Work with others in the region and beyond and build a balanced and stable order in the region, with respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity.
 - ✓ **Trilateral cooperation** with like-minded partners in the region will be a key pillar of cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region in particular through the dialogue launched with the United Arab Emirates, a strategic partner for both countries, on February 4th, 2023 at ministerial level, as well as with Australia, launched in September 2020.
 - ✓ Through a unique model of Triangular Development Cooperation, India and France will work on setting up **the Indo-Pacific Triangular Cooperation (IPTDC) Fund** aimed at supporting climate and SDG focused innovations and Start-ups from third countries of the Indo-Pacific, with the goal of facilitating the scaling up of green technologies being developed in the region.
- **Putting Space at the Heart of our Strategic Relationship**
 - ✓ India and France have decided to deepen their cooperation in all areas of the space sector by strengthening their programmes of common interests including:
 - **Scientific and commercial partnership:** French National Centre for Space Studies (CNES) and ISRO will strengthen their partnership mainly around two structuring axes: climate and environment, with the development of the TRISHNA mission and activities within the Space Climate Observatory (SCO) on topics such as water resource management, marine resources and air quality monitoring; space exploration (Mars,

Venus), maritime monitoring, launchers and manned flights in connection with India's Gaganyaan programme. NSIL and Arianespace also plan to collaborate in commercial launch services.

- **Resilience of access to space:** India and France will work to strengthen their synergies in terms of sovereign access to space and the development of forward-looking technologies to boost the resilience of access to space with involvement of their space industries.
- **Adapting the Fight Against Terrorism to the New Threats to Better Protect our Citizens**
 - ✓ They will strengthen cooperation on all aspects which would include operational cooperation, multilateral action, countering online radicalisation and combating financing of terrorism, particularly through the No Money for Terror (NMFT) initiative and the Christchurch Call to Action to Eliminate Terrorist and Violent Extremism Content Online.
 - ✓ They welcome the work towards the formalisation of cooperation between the National Security Guard (NSG) of India and the Groupe d'intervention de la Gendarmerie nationale (GIGN) of France through the Letter of Intent between India and France for Cooperation in the field of Counterterrorism.
 - This will help deepen their cooperation on internal security and the fight against transnational organized crime, including human trafficking, financial crime and environmental crime.
- **Promoting a Renewed and Effective Multilateralism**
 - ✓ India and France reject attempts to undermine the fundamental principles of the international order and in particular the principles enshrined in the United Nations Charter and are committed to reforming global governance to reflect contemporary new realities.
 - ✓ India and France promote the reform of the Security Council to enlarge membership in its two categories. They support the credentials of the G4 and therefore those of India, to join the Security Council as new permanent members and support better representation from Africa including among the permanent members, and to pursue conversations on the regulation of the use of veto in case of mass atrocities.
- **Joining Forces to make Science, Technological Innovation and Academic Cooperation Vectors of Progress and Independence for our countries**
 - ✓ India and France agree to further deepen their cooperation to promote research partnerships and technologies, which are essential to ensure our countries' self-reliance:
 - Scientific cooperation: creating an India-France Joint Strategic Committee and strengthening of their scientific and technological cooperation tools, in particular the Indo-French Centre for the Promotion of Advanced Research (CEFIPRA).
 - Critical technologies: bilateral cooperation on advanced digital technologies, particularly in the fields of supercomputing, cloud computing, Artificial Intelligence and quantum technologies, including in the framework of the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPIA).
 - Health Cooperation: Letter of Intent for Cooperation in the field of Health and Medicine which provides the basis for cooperation in new areas including Digital Health, AI for Healthcare, Medical Waste Treatment Technology, Biotechnology, One Health approach for fight against antimicrobial resistance, exchange and training of medical doctors, among others.

- Cyber Cooperation: India and France reaffirmed the growing strategic importance of cyberspace in bilateral relationship and underscored the role of bilateral cyber dialogue in deepening cyber cooperation.
- Digital regulation: India and France encourage dialogue between French actors such as CNIL, the French data protection authority and relevant Indian counterparts. At the European level, they support close discussions with the European Union on digital regulation and data privacy. They support the objectives of the partnership on information and democracy.
- Cooperation on Digital Technologies: Both the countries commit to further deepening their cooperation in areas like digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity, Start up, AI, supercomputing, 5G/6G telecom and digital skills development.

Pillar 2: Partnership for the Planet

- **Strengthening energy security to meet our climate objectives**
 - ✓ Cooperating closely on transition towards a low carbon economy, with the triple objective of meeting the growing demand for energy driven by India's urbanization and industrialization, increasing energy security and achieving the SDG7 and Paris Climate Agreement objectives.
 - ✓ Offer sustainable development solutions to the countries of the region through multilateral and third country initiatives, including the Indo-Pacific Parks Partnership, International Solar Alliance and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) to protect marine and terrestrial biodiversity.
 - ✓ French organizations will also work with Indian counterparts to strengthen training in nuclear field and encourage/facilitate internships for Indian students.
 - ✓ Both countries 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).
 - ✓ Decarbonated hydrogen: India and France are developing close cooperation in innovation in decarbonated hydrogen production capacities and regulatory standards.
 - ✓ France supports India's efforts to develop an intelligent electricity network, reduce the energy intensity of its economy and improve the energy performance of its buildings, urban, industrial and transport facilities, building on the success of the Smart Cities programmes conducted in India. Both sides agreed to explore sharing of expertise in Energy Data collection and analysis.
- **Jointly addressing the triple crises of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution**
 - ✓ India and France are cooperating in the area of public health in the spirit of the One Health approach, by exploring cooperation in the PREZODE initiative, participating in the negotiations of an agreement on pandemics, and bilaterally, in the areas of hospital and pharmaceutical cooperation.
 - ✓ Circular economy and plastic pollution: India and France are actively involved in the on-going negotiations of a new legally binding international instrument to end plastic pollution.
 - India and France are working to involve new countries in the Indo-French commitment on the elimination of single use plastic pollution.
 - ✓ India and France welcome the adoption of the Treaty on the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biodiversity in Areas beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) to address, in a coherent and cooperative manner, biological diversity loss and degradation of ecosystems of the ocean.

- **Supporting urban and ecological transitions in India as well as social inclusion**
 - ✓ India and France are strengthening their collaboration on solutions to support cities by promoting a circular economy with a focus on integrated waste management, involving the strengthening of waste collection & transportation, waste to wealth solutions; improving liquid and solid waste management by cities.
 - ✓ The launch of the 2nd phase of the City Investments to Innovate, Integrate and Sustain (CITIIS 2.0) programme will promote innovative solutions in this area.
 - CITIIS 2.0 also aims at promoting Climate Governance at the State level and building capacities of municipal functionaries.
 - ✓ Strengthening their cooperation on the railway sector and by exploring new solutions to address mobility issues, especially in urban areas like the projects set up in Ahmedabad and Surat.
 - ✓ Social inclusion: India and France are keen to promote a more inclusive and environmentally-friendly development and encourage initiatives that contribute to the financial inclusion of women and vulnerable populations and promote the development of priority development areas.
- **Strengthening trade and facilitating investments between our two countries, with a view to sustainable growth and transition to low carbon energy**
 - ✓ Trade: India and France are intensifying their bilateral dialogue in order to resolve as soon as possible the difficulties encountered by Indian and French exporters and investors.
 - ✓ Cross-investment: India and France encourage Indian and French companies to strengthen their ties and develop activities in both countries, notably with the aim of increasing the presence of French investors in India and Indian investors in France.

Pillar 3: Partnership for the People

- **Promoting exchanges, especially for the benefit of youth**
 - ✓ The Partnership Agreement on Migration and Mobility, which came into force in 2021, is an important step in realizing our shared commitment towards enhancing the mobility of students, graduates, academics, researchers, professionals and skilled workers.
 - ✓ India and France, on a reciprocal basis, will grant visa exemption for short stays for official passport holders and assess the effectiveness of this exemption in 2026.
 - ✓ Both countries will encourage the development of partnerships between higher education institutions, research centres and private companies to strengthen cooperation in vocational and language training.
 - ✓ Student mobility: India and France are committed to strengthen their academic ties and to foster exchanges of students. France reaffirms its ambition to welcome 20,000 Indian students by 2025 and raise this ambition to 30,000 in 2030.
- **Promoting regular dialogue between our cultures**
 - ✓ Cooperation in the field of museums and heritage: As nations endowed with rich culture and history, India and France will intensify their joint work to showcase their heritage and pass it on to future generations. India and France welcome the signing of the Letter of Intent for the National Museum of India project.
 - ✓ Cinema: France, the largest film market in Europe, and India, the largest film producer in the world, are supporting the export of their productions, the facilitation of co-productions under

their Audio-Visual Co-production Agreement, and the promotion of their country's attractiveness for filming.

- ✓ Artistic and literary cooperation: India and France share the objective of ensuring an increased level of mobility of professionals and artists between our two countries.
- ✓ Linguistic cooperation: India and France are committed to developing the Alliances Françaises network in India and to encouraging the development of French language teaching programmes, notably by assisting in curriculum and provision of teaching learning material as well as age-appropriate textbooks, in Indian private and government schools.

Challenges in India-France Relations

Absence of Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

Defence and Security Cooperation

Trade Imbalances

Intellectual Property Rights

China's Influence

Climate Change and Energy Cooperation

- **Absence of Free Trade Agreement (FTA):** Despite good relations, India and France do not have a Free Trade Agreement, and progress on the India-EU Broad Based Trade and Investment agreement (BTIA) is also stalled.
- **Defence and Security Cooperation:** Both countries have different priorities and approaches towards defence and security cooperation. India's focus on its neighborhood and "non-aligned" policy sometimes clashes with France's global interests.
- **Trade Imbalances:** There is a trade imbalance between India and France, with France exporting more to India. This has been a concern for India, and efforts are being made to address it.
- **Intellectual Property Rights:** France has criticized India for not adequately protecting intellectual property rights, affecting French businesses in India.
- **China's Influence:** Both countries are concerned about China's increasing dominance in the Indian Ocean region, which can disrupt regional balance and security.
- **Climate Change and Energy Cooperation:** India's reliance on thermal power over solar energy hampers progress in the International Solar Alliance. Cooperation on Indo-Pacific and nuclear projects faces challenges and delays.

Way Forward

- **Increased Trade and Investment:** Both countries can enhance bilateral trade and investment through joint ventures, expanded trade agreements, and cross-border investment promotion.
- **Defense Cooperation:** Strengthening the defense relationship can be achieved through increased cooperation in joint military exercises, technology transfers, and collaboration in defense production.
- **Indo-Pacific Strategy:** Cooperating on an inclusive, sovereign, engaging, and freedom of navigation approach to the Indo-Pacific, and building coalitions to address challenges from China and promote multilateral values.
- **Maritime and Security Issues:** Collaborating on maritime domain awareness, counter-terrorism, cybercrime, piracy, disaster relief, and the blue economy. Engaging on a multilateral level through QUAD, ASEM, and trilateral dialogues.

- **Digital Cooperation:** Fast-tracking initiatives for cooperation in data protection, data localization, investing in Indian technology, and supply chain diversification. Developing international regulations for digital data independence.

France is a crucial partner for India and can play a significant role in India's strategy in the Indo-Pacific, meeting climate goals, addressing global tech issues, and strengthening international cooperation. India and France have a similar vision for a balanced world that follows the rule of law. By working together, they believe they can create a better world order that benefits everyone. By strengthening their shared values and commitments, the partnership between France and India can reach new heights in the coming years.