



India-France Relations

For Prelims: [Republic Day \(26th January\)](#), [Indo-Pacific Region](#), [Indian Ocean Region](#), [Indo-Pacific Triangular Development Cooperation Fund](#).

For Mains: India-France Cooperation, Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Source: TH

Why in News?

Recently, the President of France visited India on the Occasion of **Republic Day (26th January)**, where India and France discussed Bilateral cooperation, expressing satisfaction with the increasing “complexity and interoperability” of India-France joint defence exercises.

What are the Key Highlights of the India-France Bilateral Meeting?

- **Intensification of Cooperation in Southwest Indian Ocean:**
 - Both countries agreed to **intensify cooperation in the Southwest Indian Ocean**, building on joint surveillance missions carried out **from the French island territory of La Reunion** in 2020 and 2022.
 - This cooperation contributes **positively to the securitisation** of strategic **sea lanes of communication**.
- **Indo-Pacific Partnership:**
 - Both sides emphasized the **significance of the Indo-Pacific Region** for their sovereign and strategic interests.
 - They committed to **deepening the long-standing partnership** in the Indo-Pacific, based on their common vision, and expressed satisfaction with the expanding **nature of their engagement in the region**.
- **Defence and Security Partnership:**
 - The defence and security partnership between India and France in the Indo-Pacific region was highlighted as a cornerstone of their collaboration.
 - This partnership includes a comprehensive range of bilateral, multinational, regional, and institutional initiatives, especially in the **Indian Ocean Region**.
 - The leaders **discussed joint tri-services exercises** and increasing capacities, particularly in the **maritime domain**.
- **Trilateral Cooperation:**
 - Both countries committed to **revitalising trilateral cooperation with Australia**, deepening cooperation with the **United Arab Emirates (UAE)**, and exploring new **trilateral partnerships in the region**.
 - In June 2023, the first edition of **India, France and UAE Maritime Partnership Exercise** commenced in the Gulf of Oman.
- **Economic Development and Connectivity:**
 - Both countries acknowledged the importance of joint and multilateral initiatives for

supporting sustainable economic development, human welfare, environmental sustainability, resilient infrastructure, innovation, and connectivity in the region.

- They called for the early launching of the [Indo-Pacific Triangular Development Cooperation Fund](#) to facilitate the scaling up of green technologies.

▪ **India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC):**

- The leaders recalled the launch of the [India-Middle East-Europe Corridor \(IMEC\)](#), considering it of great strategic importance for enhancing the potential and resilience of commerce and energy flow between India, the [Middle East](#), and Europe.

▪ **Multilateralism and UN Reform:**

- Both countries called for **reformed and effective multilateralism**, stressing the urgent need for the reform of the [United Nations Security Council \(UNSC\)](#).
 - France reiterated its support for India's permanent membership in the UNSC.
- Both Sides highlighted the need for the reform of **Multilateral Development Banks** and welcomed the report submitted by the Independent Expert Group for providing concrete suggestions in this regard.
- They acknowledged enhanced cooperation between the [Paris Club](#) and **India** in official debt restructuring cases.

▪ **Defence Industrial Cooperation:**

- Both sides reiterated their commitment to **deepening integration between the two countries' defense industrial sectors**. They discussed co-design, co-development, and co-production opportunities for defence supplies, not only for India but also for other friendly countries.

• **Tata Group and Airbus Agreement:**

- **Tata Group and Airbus** signed an agreement for the development and manufacturing of **civilian helicopters**.

- Tata and Airbus are already cooperating to make the [C-295 Transport Aircraft](#) in Gujarat.

- The industrial partnership aims to produce **H125 helicopters with a significant indigenous** and localization component.

• **Shakti Jet Engine Deal:**

- Ongoing discussions between India and **Safran regarding the Shakti jet engine deal** were highlighted. The focus of these discussions is on achieving specifications aligned with India's future fighter jet requirements, involving aspects beyond just the transfer of manufacturing technology.

• **CFM International and Akasa Air:**

- French jet engine maker CFM International also announced an agreement with India's Akasa Air to buy **more than 300 of its LEAP-1B engines** to power 150 Boeing open new tab 737 MAX aircraft.

▪ **Space Cooperation:**

- The countries launched the **Strategic Space Dialogue**, signed a Letter of Intent on Defence Space Cooperation, and an MoU between [ISRO's New Space India Limited \(NSIL\)](#) and **Arianespace of France** for satellite launch missions.
- The leaders expressed dedication to expanding space cooperation, including co-development, manufacture, and launch of satellites.



What are the Major Areas of Cooperation between India and France?

▪ Pillars of Relationship:

- India and France **share long-standing cultural, trade and economic linkages**. The India-France strategic **partnership, signed in 1998**, has gathered significant momentum over time and has today evolved into an even closer multifaceted relationship that spans diverse areas of cooperation.
- Both countries **have held on to three pillars in the relationship**:
 - Mutual respect for **non-interference in internal matters**.
 - A firm commitment to **strategic autonomy and non-alignment**.
 - A shared stance of **refraining from involving each other** in respective coalitions and alliances.

▪ Defence Partnerships:

- At the core of the **Indo-French relationship** is the **defence partnership**; France comes across as a far more willing and generous partner when compared to other western countries.
- Starting with the **Rafale deal** to the acquisition of 26 Marine versions of Aircraft, the French have been willing to give the Indians some of their best defence systems.
- The technology transfers by France have already helped India construct **six Scorpene-class submarines** with another three now being procured to boost the navy's falling numbers.
 - **Joint Exercises**: [Exercise Shakti \(Army\)](#), [Exercise Varuna \(Navy\)](#), [Exercise Garuda \(Air Force\)](#).

▪ Similarity in Stand on NATO+ (Plus):

- France announced publicly that it disapproves of a **North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)-plus (NATO+)** partnership plans, that would see the Trans-Atlantic alliance build direct ties with Japan, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea and even India.
- India has also rejected the plan saying that NATO "is not a template that applies to India".

▪ Economic Cooperation:

- Bilateral trade between the two countries reached a new **peak at USD 13.4 billion in 2022-23**, with exports from India crossing USD 7 billion.
- France is the 11th largest foreign investor in India, with a cumulative investment of USD 10.49 billion from April 2000 to December 2022.

▪ Cooperation at International Forum:

- France supports India's bid for permanent membership of the **United Nations Security Council** as well as its entry into the **Nuclear Suppliers Group**.

▪ Climate Cooperation:

- Both countries are concerned about climate change, and India has supported France in the **Paris Agreement** expressing its strong commitment to mitigating the effects of climate change.

- Both countries, as part of their joint efforts on climate change, launched the [International Solar Alliance](#) in 2015.

What are the Challenges Between India-France Relations?

- **FTA and BTIA Stagnation:**
 - The absence of an [FTA \(Free Trade Agreement\) between](#) France and India hinders the maximisation of their trade potential.
 - Additionally, the slow progress on the [India-EU Broad-Based Trade and Investment Agreement \(BTIA\)](#) further compounds the challenges in fostering comprehensive economic cooperation.
- **Differing Defense and Security Priorities:**
 - Despite a strong defense partnership, differences in priorities and approaches can influence defence and security cooperation.
 - India's regional focus and its "non-aligned" policy may at times clash with France's global interests.
- **Intellectual Property Rights Concerns:**
 - France has raised concerns **about India's inadequate protection of [intellectual property rights](#)**, impacting French businesses operating within India. This presents a challenge to fostering a conducive environment for bilateral trade.
- **Trade Imbalance and Dominance of Defense Products:**
 - Although France is India's 11th trade partner, there is a notable trade imbalance.
 - The dominance of defence products in the trade relationship **poses challenges for diversification and achieving a more balanced** economic exchange.
- **Barriers to Indian Products in France:**
 - India has faced challenges in exporting its products to France, particularly in the context of [Sanitary and Phytosanitary \(SPS\) measures](#). This can act as a discouragement to Indian products entering the French market.
- **Student Mobility:**
 - While the French President announced plans to **welcome 30,000 Indian students to France**, issues related to student mobility, including visa processes and cultural integration, may pose challenges to realising this goal.
- **Human Trafficking Concerns:**
 - **Instances such as the Nicaragua flight case** involving [human trafficking raise](#) concerns and underscore the need for enhanced cooperation in addressing transnational crimes and ensuring the safety and well-being of individuals.

Way Forward

- India and France **both can support each other** in shaping international order or even to balance out other nations on which one of them is heavily dependent.
- The Indo-Pacific concept **has provided a useful frame for the thriving Franco-Indian relations**. France, more than the [Quad partners](#), has a direct interest in the stability of the Indian Ocean owing to its overseas territories and military bases in the Indian Ocean.
- The Indo-Pacific forum between the two should be able to better assist in ensuring strategic interests and bilateral cooperation.
- France plays a critical role in India's ambitious plans to expand domestic weapon production with increased private and foreign investment.
- Discussions should encompass emerging areas of collaboration, including connectivity, climate change, cyber-security, and science and technology.

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Prelims:

Q. Consider the following statements: (2016)

1. The International Solar Alliance was launched at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in 2015.
2. The Alliance includes all the member countries of the United Nations.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 only
- (b) 2 only
- (c) Both 1 and 2
- (d) Neither 1 nor 2

Ans: (a)

Mains:

Q. How will the I2U2 (India, Israel, UAE and USA) grouping transform India's position in global politics? (2022)

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