Chandrawat & Partners



BILATERAL RELATIONS

INDIA - FRANCE

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INTRODUCTION

France–India relations are the bilateral relations between France and India, two countries that have traditionally been close and friendly. Both countries have a 'special relationship' with each other, so much so that by August 2019, France has been called "India's new best friend" by a researcher of the Hudson Institute. Both nations have a centuries-old history of trade relations. From the 17th century until 1954, France maintained a colonial presence in the Indian subcontinent; Puducherry, one of its former Indian territories, is a popular tourism destination for French travellers to India.

With the establishment of the strategic partnership in 1998, there has been significant progress in all areas of bilateral cooperation through regular high-level exchanges at the Head of State/Head of Government levels and growing commercial exchanges including in strategic areas such as defence, nuclear energy and space. France was the first country with which India entered into an agreement on nuclear energy following the waiver given by the International Atomic Energy Agency and the Nuclear Suppliers' Group, enabling India to resume full civil nuclear cooperation with the international community. There is also a growing and wide-ranging cooperation in areas such as trade and investment, culture, science and technology and education. France has consistently supported India's goals for a multipolar world, led by regional democracies.



HISTORY

In the 17th century François Bernier (1625–1688), a French physician and traveler, became for 12 years the personal physician of the Mughal emperor Aurangzeb. In the 18th century, France was actively involved in the European colonial powerplay in the Indian Ocean region.

The French General Dupleix was allied to Murzapha Jung in the Deccan, and Chanda Sahib in the Carnatic Wars, in the conflict against Robert Clive of the East India Company. These relationships were beneficial to the French, and French allies gifted areas such as the Alamparai Fort in return for the services provided by the French against the British.

The French succeeded in the 1746 Battle of Madras, and the French and Indians fought together and vanquished Anwaruddin in 1749, but failed in the Battle of Arcot in 1751 and finally surrendered in 1752. The French again had a success at the capture of Fort St David in 1758 under Lally, but were finally defeated at Machilipatnam (1759) and Vandavasi (1760).

The French military adventurer and mercenary, Benoît de Boigne, made his name in India under the Marathas, whom he assisted in many battles against the British East India Company.

French had lost pre-eminence in India with the Treaty of Paris (1763), although five trading posts were being maintained there, leaving opportunities for disputes and power-play with Great Britain. France was successful in supporting the American War of Independence in 1776, and wished to expel the British from India as well.

In 1782, Louis XVI sealed an alliance with the Maratha Peshwa Madhav Rao Narayan. As a consequence Bussy moved his troops to Ile de France (Mauritius) and later contributed to the French effort in India in 1783. Suffren became the ally of Hyder Ali in the Second Anglo-Mysore War against British rule in India, in 1782–1783, fighting the British fleet on the coasts of India and Ceylon. Between February 1782 until June 1783, Suffren fought the English admiral Sir Edward Hughes, and collaborated with the rulers of Mysore. An army of 3,000 French soldiers collaborated with Hyder Ali to capture Cuddalore.

While Great Britain established its authority over the Madras Presidency (covering the modern Indian states of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu), France retained control of Pondicherry, Karikal, Yanam, and Mahé, as well as maintaining a foothold in Chandannagar, now in West Bengal. During the British Raj, many Indian freedom fighters (Subramania Bharati, Lala Lajpat Rai, Sri Aurobindo) sought refuge in French establishments in India to stay out of reach of the British.

SIKH-FRENCH RELATIONS

Maharaja Ranjit Singh had more than 2000 French soldiers in his military. Three became generals and were key in the modernization of the Khalsa Army. He also hired many Italian, American, Spanish and Prussian soldiers. The Fauj-I-Khas was also known as the French division of the army and had French battle standard with its tricolor and eagle. The men who spearheaded the Europeanization of the army was Jean Francois Allard and Jean-Baptiste Ventura. Even now a statue of Maharaja Ranjit Singh is in Saint Tropez, France.

India in World War I and World War II

Indian Expeditionary Force A, Indian Army Service Corps and Imperial Service Troops contributed to defend France during World War I and World War II.

Darwan Singh Negi, Gabar Singh Negi, Gobind Singh Rathore and Mir Dast were awarded the Victoria Cross for exceptional gallantry on French battlefields. Flight Lieutenant Hardit Singh Malik of No. 28 Squadron RFC flew a Sopwith Camel over France during WWI.Some of the more prominent battles involving troops from the Indian sub-continent:

- Battle of Neuve Chapelle
- Battle of Armentières
- First Battle of Ypres
- Battle of the Somme
- Battle of Loos
- Battle of Bazentin
- Battle of La Bassée
- Battle of Flers-Courcelette
- Battle of Festubert
- Battle of Aubers Ridge
- Battle of Cambrai
- the advance to the Hindenburg Line
- First Battle of Champagne.

CESSION OF FRENCH TERRITORIES IN INDIA

France established diplomatic relations with the newly independent India in 1947. An agreement between France and India in 1948 stipulated that the inhabitants of France's Indian possessions would choose their political future. A treaty of cession was signed by the two countries in May 1956. It was ratified by the French parliament in May 1962. On 16 August 1962 India and France exchanged the instruments of ratification under which France ceded to India full sovereignty over the territories it held. Pondicherry and the other enclaves of Karaikal, Mahe and Yanam came to be administered as the Union Territory of Puducherry from 1 July 1963.

The merits and deficiencies of French colonial presence in India is disputed on accounts of the exploitative nature of colonial trade, segregation of French subjects within the colonial possessions along ethnic lines (Europeans and Creoles were differentiated from ethnic Indians on electoral lists) and the colonial use of indenture labour.



DEVELOPMENT OF BILATERAL RELATIONS

The bilateral relations with France, although globally positive, fluctuated in function of defence sales to Pakistan (Exocet missiles, Dassault Mirage III, Dassault Mirage 5 & Breguet Atlantic aircraft and Daphné-class & Agosta 90B-class submarines) and were offset by especially strong relations in the fields of civil nuclear energy and aerospace.

Visits by Head of State and Head of Government

A key milestone in the bilateral relationship was the visit in 1998 by President Jacques Chirac. The visit elevated the relationship through the signing of India's first ever strategic partnership.

In January 2008, President Nicolas Sarkozy visited India and was the chief guest at India's Republic Day parade. In September 2008, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh made a major visit to France.

On 14 July 2009, Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh was the Guest of Honour for the Bastille Day Celebrations held in Paris. The 2009 Bastille Day military parade opened with a contingent of Indian troops drawn from the three services (Indian Army, Indian Navy and Indian Air Force). Soldiers including Jawans of Maratha Light Infantry Regiment Centre (MLIRC) marched down the Avenue Champs-Élysées to the sound of an Indian military band playing Indian martial tunes including Saare Jahan Se Achcha, Haste Lushai and Kadam Kadam Badaye Ja.

French President Sarkozy undertook his second visit to India from 4–7 December 2010.
French President Francois Hollande visited India on 14–15 February 2013.

Indian Prime-Minister Narendra Modi was in Paris on 10–11 April 2015 for strategic bilateral discussions with French President François Hollande. A joint status report established the current state of the bilateral relationship and plans for the future through the April 2015 India-France joint statement.

On 30 November 2015, Indian Prime-Minister Narendra Modi travelled to France for a 2-day visit to attend the COP 21 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. Narendra Modi and François Hollande jointly invited over 100 world leaders to join InSPA (International Agency for Solar Policy & Application) a global initiative to promote low-carbon renewable solar energy technologies.

January 2016 visit by French President François Hollande

A French delegation headed by President François Hollande and including several French cabinet ministers (foreign minister Laurent Fabius, defence minister Jean-Yves Le Drian, finance minister Michel Sapin, culture minister Fleur Pellerin and environment minister Segolene Royal) travelled to India on 24 January 2016 for a 3- day visit.

French President François Hollande was the chief guest at the 67th.Indian Republic Day parade in New Delhi on 26 January 2016. France, along with Britain are the only countries to be invited a record-setting 5 times to the highly symbolic national ceremonial event. The 2016 Indian Republic Day parade included the first-ever participation of foreign troops in the march-past.[46] 124 French Army soldiers from the 35th. Infantry Regiment of the 7th. Armoured Brigade based in Belfort and a ceremonial military band-music contingent based in Lyon marched down Rajpath in New Delhi.

The visit gained favorable media coverage which underscored the consistently cordial and exceptional nature of Indo-French bilateral relations and decoded the political significance of the protocol courtesies extended to France. Leading Indian newspapers published editorials lauding successful bilateral cooperation in the domains of science and technology, aerospace, nuclear energy, defence and counter-terrorism. Kanwal Sibal, the former Foreign Secretary of India and who had also been India's Ambassador to France opined: "He (President Hollande) recognises the esteem India has for France and the growing affinity between the two countries." (...) "Hollande attaches value to the personal rapport he has developed with Modi, recognizes the dynamism he is imparting to the Indian economy and believes in the growing affinity between the two countries. On this basis the Indo-French strategic ties should grow in strength."

March 2018 visit by French President Emmanuel Macron

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi received the French President Emmanuel Macron. The two counterparts discussed the French-Indian relations over the years and signed multiple agreements. Modi commented that although the strategic partnership between the two countries is "just 20 years old, our cultural and spiritual partnership is older. The values of liberty, equality, and fraternity echo not just in France but have been embedded in India’s Constitution as well." Macron told the media, "We want India as our first strategic partner here, and we want to be India’s first strategic partner in Europe, and even the western world."

In August 2019, Aparna Pande, Research fellow at the Hudson Institute, penned an article claiming that France had become India's new best friend, replacing Russia as India's closest international partner.

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

The strategic partnership has profited from sustained political investments made at the senior-most levels of decision making. The long-standing relationship between France and India has resulted in extensive co-operation in the domains of aerospace and civil nuclear energy besides military matters. Science and technology cooperation, deep-rooted cultural ties, and a historically francophile literary & fine-arts community in India has provided solid foundations for the strategic relationship. In November 2011, the Foundation for National Security Research in New Delhi published India's Strategic Partners: A Comparative Assessment and ranked India's top strategic partners with a score out of 90 points : Russia comes out on top with 62, followed by the United States (58), France (51), UK (41), Germany (37), and Japan (34).

Voting patterns of France in the UN Security Council on matters of core interest to India has endeared the country as all-weather friend of India. France was one of the few nations who did not condemn India's nuclear tests in 1998 and has supported India's bid to become a permanent member of the UN Security Council as well as G-8. France is one of the largest suppliers of nuclear fuel to India, and signed a "Framework Agreement for Civil Nuclear Co-operation" in January 2008. After India's waiver from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), both nations signed an agreement that would pave the way for the sale of French-made nuclear reactors to India on 30 September 2008. France is a major supplier of military equipment to India. Procurement of Dassault Mirage 2000 fighter aircraft and a squadron of DCNS Scorpène-class submarines (called Kalvari-class submarines) are examples of strategic defence acquisitions. The armed-services of both nations conduct joint- exercises on an annual basis. France and India also maintain a discreet "strategic dialogue" that covers joint cooperation against terrorism. The strategic autonomy of the French Force de frappe resonates well within Indian strategic circles.

French Overseas regions of Réunion and Mayotte establish French sovereign presence in the Indian Ocean. Réunion has a significant ethnic Indian population colloquially called Malbars and which includes all Réunionnais of Indian origin. Réunion's location in the Indian Ocean makes France ideally positioned to leverage advantages of the Neighbourhood first policy and Indian Ocean outreach priorities which were announced by the government of Narendra Modi.

On 20 November 2015, a week after the attacks in Paris, French Minister Laurent Fabius visited New Delhi and met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj. The talks centered around enhancing cooperation to fight terrorism, as well as preparations for the 2015 Climate summit in Paris. After the meeting Fabius stated that France and India were "in the same boat" with regards to terrorism saying, "I want to say that France is grateful for tremendous support it has received from the international community including Indian friends ... We have a good cooperation with our Indian friends on this. I was discussion it this morning with Prime Minister Modi. We shall develop our cooperation."

INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE FOR DIALOGUE

France and India have instituted a Strategic Dialogue at the level of National Security Advisers whose 27th round of Strategic Dialogue was held in Paris on 12–13 January 2015. The last Foreign Office Consultations at the level of Foreign Secretaries was held in Paris on 17 June 2013.



MILITARY RELATION

Defense partnership and cooperation is built on historic French and Indian military interactions which stretch back to the Carnatic Wars. India was heavily involved in both World War I and World War II and suffered huge loss of lives on battlefields in France.

A 400-strong contingent of the Indian armed forces led the Bastille Day parade in 2009 for which the Prime Minister of India was the Guest of Honour – the first time ever that Indian troops took part in another country's national day parade.

Under the framework of the structured talks under the Indo-French Defence Cooperation Agreement several meetings on industrial collaboration and service exchanges are held regularly. The 3rd meeting of the JWG on Counter-terrorism was held in New Delhi on 19–20 November 2012. The 11th meeting of the Indo-French Research Forum (IFRF) was held in Paris from 17 to 19 December 2012. The 15th. High Level Committee for Defence Cooperation (HCDC) at the level of Defence Secretaries, met in Paris on 12 January 2015.

Indian Su-30MKIs and a French Rafale fly in formation during Exercise Garuda in 2019.

Indo-French Air Force Exercise Garuda IV was held at Istres air base in France from 14 to 25 June 2010. Indo-French Joint Naval Exercise Varuna was held in the Mediterranean sea off the port of Toulon from 19 to 22 July 2012. The first Indo-France joint army exercise named Shakti was conducted in India at Chaubattia from 9–22 October 2011. In 2013, Army chief General Bikram Singh visited Commandement des Forces Terrestres Land Forces Command in Lille and the French Military School at Draguignan. In 2015, Vice Admiral SPS Cheema, FOC-in-C West was hosted by the French Navy at Toulon. The Indo-French Joint Army exercise was held in Rajasthan, India from 19 to 21 January 2016.

Indian Prime Minister Modi stated that "We consider France one of our most reliable defense allies."

Indian and French Navies will be able to use each other's naval bases, under an agreement signed in 2018. Indian warships will be able to use French bases in Indian and southern Pacific oceans.

At the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore in 2018, French and British defense ministers announced they would sail warships through the South China Sea to challenge China's military expansion.

INTENSIFIED COLLABORATION WITH INDIA AND THE QUAD

On 9 September 2020, France, India and Australia held their first India-France-Australia Trilateral Dialogue, with their foreign secretaries meeting through videoconference. They discussed geostrategic challenges, their respective strategies for a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific, and prospects for cooperation in the region, especially in the context of the covid public health crisis.

In February 2021, France announced that a French Rubis-class nuclear attack submarine, Emeraude, has successfully concluded a passage of the South China Sea to prove the capacity for the connection with Australian, American and Japanese strategic partners.

On 24 February, a India-France-Australia Trilateral Dialogue meeting was held, to take stock of the progress made on the outcomes of the foreign secretary level trilateral dialogue held in September 2020.[91] This included amongst others maritime security, humanitarian aid and disaster relief, blue economy, protection of marine global commons, combatting illegal fishing, and cooperation in multilateral fora. They also discussed the next steps to be taken for furthering trilateral cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.

On 30 March 2021, French Navy's amphibious assault helicopter carrier Tonnerre and escort frigate Surcouf arrived at the Kochi port in Kerala, India, ahead of a joint naval exercise with the four Quad member countries. The French naval drill exercise is called La Perouse and is scheduled to take place from 5 to 7 April 2021. The 2021 edition will be the first edition with participants from all four Quad members. The two warships are on a five-month-long deployment in the Indo-Pacific.

On 13 April, a new India-France-Australia Trilateral Dialogue meeting is planned in New Delhi.

TRADE & INVESTMENT

Indo-French bilateral trade has been growing though it has still not reached the €12 billion target set by both the Governments during the visit of the French President to India in January 2008. In 2011, bilateral trade had increased by 6% to €7.46 billion. In the first ten months of 2012, there has been a decrease of 3.71% in the bilateral trade overall the same period of 2011. Based on the annual data, the Indian exports of services to France have shown a growth in the last three years reaching €1.32 bn in 2011 while the imports from France fell to €0.66 bn in the same year.



FOREIGN DIRECT INVESTMENT (FDI)

France is the 9th largest foreign investor in India with a cumulative investment of approximately US$3 billion [Investment was of the order of US$2.98 billion during the period April 2000 to June 2012, which represents 2% of total inflows]. The technical and financial collaborations approved with France number 952. Top sectors attracting FDI inflows from France are Chemicals (other than fertilisers) (18.80%), Cement and Gypsum Products (15.82%), Services Sector (financial & non-financial) (9.41%), Fuels (power & oil refinery) (6.47%) & Electrical Equipments (including computer software & electronics) (5.34%) and auto sector. There are about 800 French companies in India (subsidiaries or JVs, representative offices or branch offices with about 150,000 employees).

In 2011, India was the 13th largest foreign investor in France in terms of project numbers. Indian Investments in France have been growing and Indian companies have invested around €1 billion from April 1996 in different sectors like pharmaceuticals (Ranbaxy and Wockhardt), Software (Tata Consultancy Services, Infosys & Wipro), Wine (Kingfisher), Steel (Tata, Electrosteel), Plastics (Sintex), Railway wagons (Titagarh Wagons), Aerospace (Cades/Axis) & Autoparts (Jyoti) etc.110 Indian-owned companies, including 27 greenfield investments, are present in France and are employing over 5,600 persons.

The Indo-French CEOs Forum, formed in 2009, has been tasked to identify new avenues for cooperation and take initiatives to facilitate business links between both countries. The 16th session of the Joint Committee for Economic and Technical Cooperation, at the level of Ministers of Commerce which deals with issues related to commerce and trade, was held on 23–25 June 2010 in Paris. The fifth meeting of India France CEOs' Forum was held in New Delhi on 22–23 November 2012.

AEROSPACE

Aviation

Indian companies are major clients for Airbus & ATR aircraft. Air India, IndiGo Airlines and AirAsia India host extensive fleets of Airbus passenger aircraft.

France has been a long-standing and reliable supplier of fighter planes and light utility helicopters to the Indian armed services with aircraft such as Breguet Alizé, Dassault Ouragan, Dassault Mystère IV, Sepecat Jaguar, Aerospatiale SA 315B Lama, Aérospatiale Alouette III and Dassault Mirage 2000. France also supplies Turbomeca TM 333 and jointly developed the HAL/Turbomeca Shakti helicopter engines for HAL Dhruv. DRDO 3D Multi-Function Control Radar (MFCR) was developed as part of the Indian anti-ballistic missile programme in cooperation with THALES of France. DCNS is building six Scorpène submarines of the Kalvari class, which will be armed with SM.39 Exocet anti-ship missiles, under a technology transfer agreement at Mazagon Docks in Mumbai.

Dassault Rafale won the Indian MMRCA competition to supply 126 medium multi-role combat aircraft to the Indian Air Force. In April 2015, the inabilities to conclude negotiations on contractual obligations led the Modi government to transform the acquisition into a G2G procurement for 36 aircraft in flyaway condition to equip 3 squadrons of the Indian Air Force. Defense analysts have voiced concern that equipment procurement requirements which were defined 2 decades ago are out of sync with current requirements and the future nature of air-combat. Air forces of advanced Western nations, especially US & France, are reorganizing their air forces with increase in space-based assets and downsizing of fleets of manned combat aircraft.

Autonomous drones have become the preferred platform for high-risk missions over enemy territory in both high and low intensity conflict zones. At present, NATO uses aerial reconnaissance drones to monitor the borders of Europe and US uses maritime surveillance drones in the Western Pacific and unmanned combat drones in missions against low-value and unsophisticated targets in Iraq, Afghanistan, Libya and Syria. Defense white-papers published in OECD countries show that use of combat and reconnaissance pilotless vehicles will become widespread in the years ahead.

Space

ISRO and CNES (French National Space Agency) have an umbrella agreement, operating successfully since 1993, under which joint missions like Megha-Tropiques and SARAL have been successfully developed. ISRO has launched French SPOT satellites (Spot-6 & SPOT-7) on PSLV satellite launch vehicles.

Under a commercial Launch Service Agreement between Antrix Corporation Limited (ANTRIX), the commercial arm of ISRO and ASTRIUM SAS, a Company under EADS, France, two advanced Remote Sensing SPOT satellites were successfully launched in 2013 & 2014 on-board ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle.

Arianespace based at France has been the major provider of launch services to Indian Geo-Stationary satellites. Subsequent to the launch of APPLE satellite, 18 Indian satellites have been launched by Arianespace. On 7 October 2016, GSAT-18 communication satellite was launched successfully on board an Ariane 5 VA-231 launcher from Kourou, French Guyana.

Civil Nuclear Energy

A landmark Framework Agreement on Civil Nuclear Cooperation was signed between India and France on 30 September 2008 during the visit of Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh to France. Subsequently, during the visit of President Nicolas Sarkozy to India from 4–7 December 2010, the General Framework Agreement and the Early Works Agreement between NPCIL and Areva for implementation of EPR NPP Units at Jaitapur were signed.

Healthcare

Several French firms (Aventis, Rhodia, Pasteur Institute) are active in the life-sciences and medicare sector.

In February 2015, William Haseltine, president of ACCESS Health International and a former professor at Harvard Medical School opined that French healthcare was the best in the world surpassing even Singapore. Indian life insurance market is the fastest growing in the world and the seventh largest.

EDUCATION AND SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

Education

The bilateral educational cooperation between India and France has grown over the last few years. France and India established a Consortrium of Indo-French Universities to increase educational cooperation. Around 300 MoUs have been signed between Indian and French universities and private institutions. The number of Indian students studying in France in various fields has increased over the years. For the academic year 2011–2012, 2550 Indian students came to France.

The framework for bilateral educational cooperation is provided by the Educational Exchange Programme (EEP), which includes mutual recognition of degrees, bolstering the research programme and increasing student-scholar research mobility through a flexible visa regime was signed in 2007 by Joint Secretary, Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development and Secretary, Cooperation and Culture, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA). A Joint Working Group has also been set up under the EEP. One of the most important initiatives in the field of education has been the cooperation on the new IIT in Rajasthan, following a joint declaration in 2008. A Letter of Intent (LOI) has been signed in 2012.

In pursuant to the 1956 Treaty establishing De Jure Cession of French Establishments in India, France operates two world-class scientific research laboratories in India : French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP) and the École française d'Extrême-Orient (EFEO). In December 2014, Pondicherry University hosted the inaugural Indo-French Social Sciences Winter School. Pondicherry University and French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP) are jointly conducting the 2016 Social Sciences Winter School on the theme of Mobility and Social Dynamics from 28 November to 2 December 2016. The biennial event is attended by academics from France and India who lead multidisciplinary training workshops addressing theoretical and methodological issues in social science research.

Alliance Française has an extensive network of 19 teaching-centres within India and is very popular for French-language courses and cultural programmes. French is the second most popular European language in India after English.

Scientific & Technical Cooperation

France and India view each other as important partners in space technology and applications. Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and its French counterpart Centre National de Etudes Spatiales (CNES) have a history of cooperation and collaboration spanning about four decades. Scientific community of both nations cooperate in joint radiation experiment, space components development and space education. ISRO Vikas rocket engine benefited from Indo-French scientific collaboration in France on the Viking 4A engine built by CNES/SEP.

The Indo-French Centre for Promotion of Advanced Research (CEFIPRA) is the nodal framework for promoting bilateral scientific cooperation in fundamental and applied research, frontier technologies and exchange of scientists and post-doctoral researchers. The office of CEFIPRA has been established in Delhi and the centre is currently funded through an annual corpus of €3 million with India and France equally contributing €1.5 million each. CEFIPRA completes 25 years in 2012. The 25th Anniversary Celebrations of CEFIPRA were formally launched in a programme organised in New Delhi on 6 March 2012. As part of the Silver Jubilee celebrations, a number of programmes have been envisaged; these include holding of seminars, organising science quiz in schools and screening of documentary films.

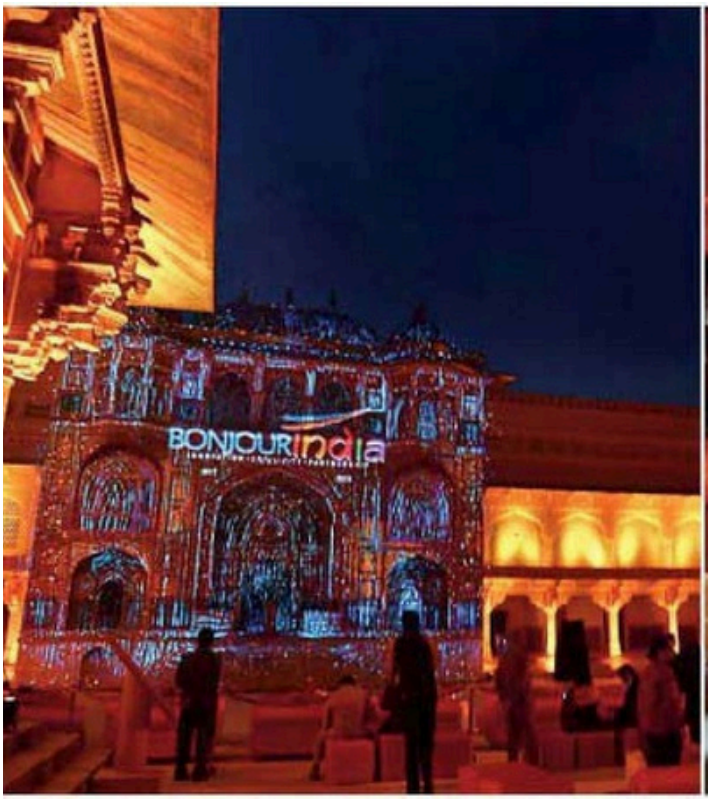
French authorities have provided land for extending the Maison de l'Inde in France, which will contribute to augmenting accommodation facilities for Indian students in Paris.

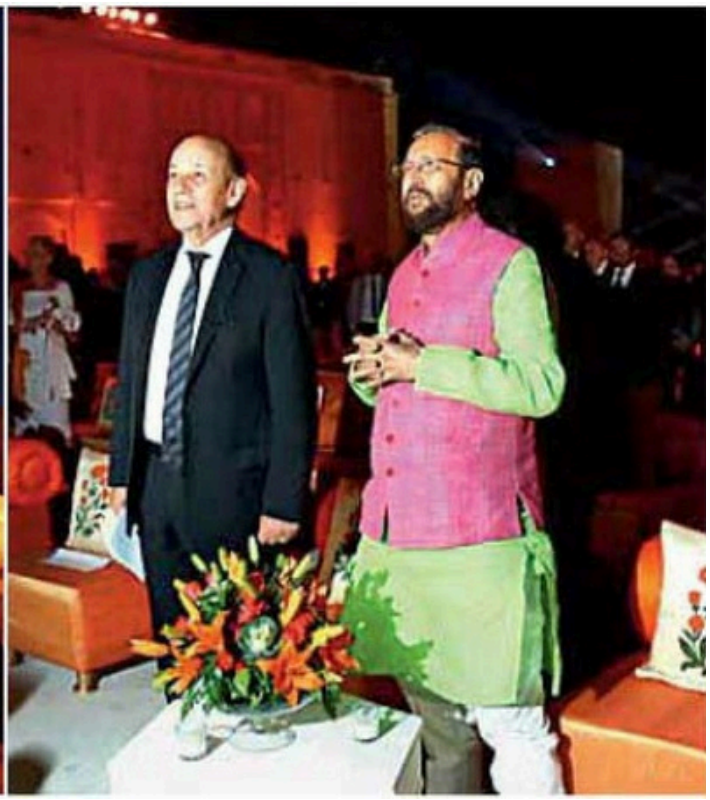
Pasteur Institute in Coonoor, Tamil Nadu which opened on 6 April 1907 is one of the oldest vaccine manufacturing public sectors enterprises in India.

Collaborative efforts to preserve heritage buildings and Vedic literature in former French establishments in India has received popular appreciation among Indian populace and served to promote French technical expertise in restoration of monuments and documents. Indian heritage conservation societies rely heavily on technical assistance and documentary archives of the French Institute of Pondicherry for restoration projects.

CULTURAL EXCHANGES

Indian culture enjoys a wide and discerning audience among the French population, as is evident in the numerous and frequent cultural events organised all over France, spanning the entire gamut of Indian art, music, dance, cinema and literature. While the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) sponsors visits of Indian artists to France as also exchange of students in the field of culture and art, there is a growing number of private impresarios who organise cultural events throughout France. A significant number of Indian artists are therefore giving performances in France regularly on a commercial basis or at the initiative of the various local cultural associations outside the purview of the official exchanges. The Indo-French Cultural Exchange Programme (CEP) provides the overall umbrella for the organisation of a variety of cultural programmes. The last (16th) session of the Joint Commission on Culture which reviews the CEP was held on 29 September 2009, in New Delhi.





NAMASTE FRANCE

The 15-month-long Indian cultural festival- "Namaste France" was held from 14 April 2010 to 28 June 2011. It was successful in terms of putting India on the cultural radar of France. ‘Namaste France’ was a comprehensive presentation of Indian culture including art, music, dance, fashion, tourism, films, and literature as also business and education in both its traditional and contemporary forms. The Namaste France Festival was organised in response to ‘Bonjour India’ a similar French cultural festival, organised by the French Embassy in India in 2009–2010. During the visit of Hon’ble Minister of Culture, Housing and Urban Poverty Alleviation, Kumari Selja to Paris to inaugurate the exhibition ‘The Last Harvest – Paintings of Tagore at the prestigious Petit Palais museum from 26 January to 11 March 2012, a Declaration of Intent was signed with her French counterpart for further reinforcing cultural cooperation on 26 January 2012. On the same day, a MOU was signed between the Ministry of Culture of India and the Louvre Museum with the aim of establishing an active partnership in the area of exchange of competencies and expertise, particularly in the field of museology, temporary exhibitions and other cultural events.

The 2012 Cannes Film Festival was important for India. For the first time, four Indian films were selected for screening in different categories of the festival namely Miss Lovely, Kalpana, Peddlers and Gangs of Wasseypur. India is going to celebrate 100 years of Indian cinema in 2013. The Cannes Festival (15–26 May 2013), the Vesoul International Film Festival of Asian Cinema (Festival international des cinémas d'Asie) from 5–12 February 2013, and the 35th International Short Film Festival of Clermont-Ferrand (1–9 February 2013) have confirmed India as a ‘Country of Honour’ in 2013 to celebrate the Centenary of the Indian Film Industry.

Bonjour India

In 1985 Indian performers were cheered at the Trocadero Alley in Paris, and in 1989 French artists enchanted audiences at Marine Drive in Mumbai. Two decades later, Bonjour India came back with a bang in 2009, and by 2013 it grew into more and more collaborations. Scaling up in its third edition, Bonjour India 2017–18 is a four-month-long mega voyage across India that will celebrate Indo-French partnership as well as shape the next decade of human exchange between the two countries. From November 2017 to February 2018, Bonjour India covers around a 100 programmes and projects in over 30 cities across 20 states & union territories. Bonjour India provides a platform for enduring partnerships highlighting Indo-French innovation and creativity across the themes of Smart Citizen, High Mobility, Go Green.

DIASPORA

Indian Community in France

According to statistics published by the Indian Embassy in Paris, the Indian community including NRIs in France is estimated to be around 106,000, largely originating from Puducherry, Karaikal, Yanam, Mahe and Chandranagar. There are large communities of PIOs in overseas territories/departments of France: Reunion Island (about 250,000), Guadeloupe (about 57,000), Martinique (about 6,000) and St. Martin (about 300).

Indians living in France have access to French social security protection and services through an agreement concluded in 2008.

French Community in India

The French in India are predominantly the remnants of the French presence in India, which began in 1673 with the establishment of French India and continued until 1962 when the French territory was formally transferred to India. The French presence was minor compared to the British and was generally ignored.

There were 12,864 French nationals residing in India in 1988. Nearly all are in the Union Territory of Puducherry in south-eastern India (11,726 individuals in 1988), with much smaller numbers in Karaikal (695 individuals), Mahé (50), Yanam (46), and 342 elsewhere in India.

Economic migration from France has resulted in the rise of skilled French expatriates in the urban population centres of Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune, Mumbai and New Delhi.

The French government had undertaken steps to strengthen Franco-Indian institutional and people-to-people ties.

Franco-Pondichérien

Franco-Pondichérien or simply Pondichérien is a term given to French citizens of Indian or mixed Creole ethnicity who continue to reside in Puducherry and who can trace their nationality to the French colonial period. Franco-Pondichériens constitute less than 2 percent of the present population of Puducherry and whose presence can be termed as ranging from 'ignored' to 'tolerated'. Franco-Pondichériens are socially regarded as foreigners in India. In France, Franco-Pondichériens face racial profiling and discrimination, due to their South Asian or mixed-race ethnicity and are perceived either as second-class citizens or economic immigrants.

Franco-Pondichériens are customarily allowed access to Indian schools and universities on par with Non-Resident Indians (NRI). India's tourism boom has turned Pondicherry into a popular travel destination and slowed the population decline of Franco-Pondichériens who find more business and work opportunities locally than having to repatriate to Europe.

Indian Citizenship Act of the Constitution of India forbids dual nationality. It is illegal to concurrently possess an Indian passport and foreign nationality and/or passport. Foreigners who possess Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI) continue to benefit consular protection from their country of nationality. Franco-Pondichériens who have served in the French armed services are disqualified from OCI: "foreign military personnel either in service or retired are not entitled for grant of OCI". Whereas OCI eligibility regarding conscripts who have undergone the mandatory military service or Journée défense et citoyenneté is unclear, Franco-Pondichériens enjoy treaty rights to visit India as guaranteed through Article IX of the 1956 Treaty establishing De Jure Cession of French Establishments in India: "French civil servants, magistrates and military personnel born in the Establishments or keeping there family links shall be permitted to return freely to the Establishments on leave or on retirement."

In February 2015, Indo French Senior Citizens Association staged street-protests in Pondicherry to protest against denial of the French nationality and voting rights derived from the 1956 Treaty establishing De Jure Cession of French Establishments in India. The 1956 treaty binds the Government of France to recognize French citizenship for individuals whose birth and nativity certificate had been registered during the French India regime.

In June 2015, locally employed contractual staff at the French Consulate in Pondicherry stopped work to protest against wage discrimination.

Perceptions

The tendency of French social academics to over emphasise the importance of the caste system for all matters pertaining to India has made French people prone to explaining away India via the caste system.

Social studies conducted by French researchers are prone to emphasise on the lacunae of India's economy rather than achievements and improvements in the sphere of poverty reduction, health-care, education, etc. French media portray India in an unfavourable light by focussing principally on events connected to crimes, corruption, inequalities, poverty, ethnic & religious strife, etc.

The morbid fascination of European tourists with Hindu cremation rituals is perceived as lack of sensitivity besides being a gross invasion of privacy. Hoards of tourists flock to cremation grounds on the banks of the Ganges, especially in Varanasi (Bénarès), to photograph funeral pyres.

BBC World Service Country Rating Poll Data for France & India

According to a 2014 BBC World Service Poll, 35% of Indians view France's influence positively, 40% neutral and 25% expressing a negative view, while 61% of the French view India's influence positively, 11% neutral and 28% expressing a negative view.

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