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**Press Information Bureau
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Ministry of Defence**

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India and France to Strengthen Bilateral Defence Cooperation as a Key Pillar of Their Strategic Partnership

Raksha Mantri Smt Nirmala Sitharaman received the French Minister for the Armed Forces, Ms Florence Parly, in South Block today. Minister Parly is visiting India from 26-28 October, 2017 on her first official visit as the French Minister for the Armed Forces.

The Ministers reviewed ongoing initiatives to further strengthen bilateral defence cooperation as a key pillar of the strategic partnership between India and France. They also discussed regional and international developments of mutual interest.

A range of measures to expand military to military ties, including enhancing the scope of their joint exercises, in particular the VARUNA naval exercise scheduled in early 2018, were agreed upon. Both countries will also actively explore additional measures to facilitate operational level interactions between their respective armed forces.

The Ministers reiterated their strong intention to further expand bilateral cooperation on counter- terrorism. Recognising the growing significance of maritime security in the Indo-Pacific and the need for greater maritime domain awareness, India and France will further expand information sharing arrangements building upon the Technical Arrangement on Exchange of White Shipping information signed earlier this year.

The two Ministers also comprehensively reviewed developments in defence equipment and industry cooperation, where France is a major partner. They agreed to strongly support projects for defence manufacturing under the Make in India initiative as well as promote defence technology and R&D cooperation.

MJPS/NA/NM/RP