



Prime Minister's Office

English rendering of the Press Statement by Prime Minister during the visit of President of France (March 10, 2018)

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My friend, Macron, the President of France,

Respected members of the delegation, The Media,

Namaskar!

I warmly welcome President Macron and the delegates accompanying him. Mr. President, a few months ago you had welcomed me warmly in Paris last year. I am extremely glad that today I have got this opportunity to welcome you on the soil of India.

Mr. President,

Both of us are sharing the stage. We both are not only the leaders of two powerful, independent and diverse democracies but also the successors of two rich and capable heritage. Although our strategic partnership is 20 years old but the spiritual partnership of our civilizations is centuries old.

Since the 18th century, the French thinkers have been peeping inside the soul of India through the stories of Panchatantra, through the great men like Sri Ramakrishna and Sri Aurobindo and through the Vedas, Upanishads and epics. Several ideas of the numerous great personalities like Voltaire, Victor Hugo, Romain Rolland, René Daumal and André Malraux were inspired from India.

The President,

Today our meeting is not only a meeting of the leaders of two countries but is a confluence of two civilizations with similar ideas and their collective heritage. It is no coincidence that the echo of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity' is found not only in France but also in the Constitution of India. The societies of the two countries stand on the foundation of these values. Our brave soldiers have sacrificed their lives in the two world wars for these values.

Friends,

The presence of France and India on the same stage is a golden sign for an inclusive, open, prosperous and a peaceful world. The autonomous and independent foreign policies of the two countries are focussed not only in their interests or the interests of the countrymen but also for upholding the universal human values. Today, the two countries India and France can face any global challenge by walking hand-in-hand. Mr. President, your leadership has made this job easier. The International Solar Alliance was launched in Paris along with the French President in 2015. The International Solar Alliance Founding Conference, that will be held tomorrow, is a vivid example of our awareness regarding shared responsibilities. I am glad that this auspicious task will be accomplished along with the President of France.

Friends,

The history of bilateral cooperation between India and France in the areas of defence, security, space and high-technology is age-old. There is a bipartisan agreement about bilateral relations between the two countries. The graph of our relations has always been rising irrespective of the government in the two countries. You have received the details of the conversation and the decisions taken in today's agreement. Therefore, I would like to present my views on three specific aspects. First, our relations in the defense sector are very intense and we consider France as one of the most trusted defence partners. Regular discussions and military exercises are held between our armies. Our relations in defence equipment and production are strong. We welcome France's commitment to Make in India in the defence Sector.

Today, I consider the agreement of 'reciprocal logistics support' between our armies as a golden step in the history of our close defence cooperation. Secondly, both of us believe that the future of the Indian Ocean region is going to play a very important role for the happiness, progress and prosperity of the world. We are committed to strengthen our cooperation in the areas such as the environment, the maritime security, the marine resources, freedom of navigation and over flight. So, today we are releasing a joint strategic vision for our cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.

Thirdly, we believe that the most important dimension for the bright future of our bilateral relations, is our people-to-people contact, especially between our youth. We want the youngsters to know and understand each others' country, stay there and work so that thousands of ambassadors are ready for extending the relations. Therefore we have signed two important agreements today. One is for recognizing each other's educational qualifications and the second is regarding migration and mobility partnership. These two agreements will prepare the framework of close relations between our people and our youth.

Friends,

There are many other dimensions of our relationships. If I start mentioning all, it will be evening by the time I finish mentioning all. Our cooperation ranges from railways, urban development, environment, security, space, i.e. from the ground to sky. There is no area untouched. We are also coordinating in the international panel. India and France have strong relations with African countries. They provide a strong base for developing another dimension of our cooperation. Tomorrow the International Solar Alliance's Founding Conference will be co-chaired by President Macron and me. We will also be accompanied by the presidents, governments and several ministers of many other countries. For the sake of Planet Earth's future, we are all committed to the success of the International Solar Alliance.

President, I hope that day-after-tomorrow in Varanasi, you will experience the taste of ancient and the evergreen soul of India, that is the essence of India's civilization and that has inspired many thinkers, writers and artists of France. In the coming two days President Macron and I will continue to exchange ideas. I once again warmly welcome the President and his delegation warmly in India.

Thanks a lot!

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