

India-France Relations: The Trust-Based Foundation of a Strategic Partnership

June 13, 2026 • vajiramandravi.com



India-France Relations Latest News

- PM Modi is on a visit to France — his **seventh** official visit since 2014 — combining a bilateral summit with President Emmanuel Macron and attendance at the G7 Leaders' Summit in Evian (June 16-17).
- The visit follows Macron's visit to India in February 2026, when bilateral relations were elevated to a “**Special Global Strategic Partnership**” — the highest level of diplomatic engagement between the two countries.

The Current Visit: Key Highlights

- The central theme of the bilateral visit is **technology and innovation**, reflecting the deepening of the relationship beyond traditional defence ties.
- Modi and Macron will jointly inaugurate **Bharat Innovates** in Nice — an event bringing together over 120 Indian companies and startups alongside French and global business leaders, held as part of the **India-**

France Year of Innovation.

- The bilateral summit in Nice will be the first formal summit since the elevation of ties to Special Global Strategic Partnership.
- Later, both leaders will attend **VivaTech Summit** in Paris — Europe's largest technology and startup event — where India will have its largest-ever pavilion at the summit.

G7 Summit: India's Strategic Presence

- At the G7 in Evian, the West Asia conflict and its energy and security implications will dominate the agenda.
- Recent US attacks on ships in the Strait of Hormuz have killed Indian sailors, directly threatening India's energy security and the safety of its diaspora.
- India's presence at the G7 — with US President Trump also attending — gives New Delhi a crucial platform to raise these concerns.
- This will be **India's 13th participation at the G7** and PM Modi's seventh consecutive appearance.

Historical Foundations of the Partnership

• France's Consistent Support Through Critical Moments

- The durability of India-France ties is best understood through moments of political courage, not just diplomatic routine.
- In 1976, when India faced global criticism over the Emergency, French Prime Minister Jacques Chirac agreed to be the Republic Day Chief Guest — a bold statement of solidarity.
- He returned 22 years later as President to launch the **India-France Strategic Partnership** — India's first strategic partnership with any Western nation, and **France's first with a non-Western nation**.
- Months after this partnership was launched, India conducted the Pokhran-II nuclear tests in May 1998.
- Western powers imposed sanctions. France did not. This single act cemented the trust that has defined the relationship ever since.

• Leadership-Level Trust: The Macron-Modi Dynamic

- The personal chemistry between leaders has been a force multiplier for the relationship.
- A notable example: in December 2023, after US President Biden declined India's Republic Day invitation at the last minute, India quietly reached out to the Élysée Palace.
- Macron accepted immediately, fully aware he was the second choice — a gesture that spoke volumes about the depth of trust. Modi reciprocated in 2025 by headlining France's AI Summit in Paris.
- France has also consistently championed India's participation in G-level forums.
- It was France that first invited India to the G8 in 2003 under President Chirac, when PM Vajpayee attended the Evian summit.

The Four Pillars of India-France Partnership

• Defence

- India-France defence cooperation is among the deepest India has with any Western country.
- It spans the full spectrum — air power, naval assets, missiles, and helicopter engines.

- Flagship examples include the **Rafale fighter aircraft**, **Scorpene submarines**, and **Shakti helicopter** engines.
- These are not just procurement deals — they involve technology transfer and joint production, reflecting India's Atmanirbhar Bharat defence vision.
- **Space**
 - The ISRO-CNES (French national space agency) partnership spans six decades — one of India's oldest and most productive international space collaborations.
 - Joint achievements include satellite development — **Megha-Tropiques and SARAL** — joint launches, and collaboration on India's human spaceflight mission Gaganyaan.
 - The two countries are also developing a new joint satellite mission called **TRISHNA**.
- **Nuclear Energy**
 - With the passage of India's **SHANTI Act** (Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India), new doors have opened for Indo-French nuclear industry collaboration.
 - In February 2025, both countries signed a Declaration of Intent on Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) and Advanced Modular Reactors (AMRs) — a cutting-edge area of next-generation nuclear technology that aligns with India's clean energy transition goals.
- **Technology**
 - The tech partnership is the newest and fastest-growing pillar.
 - This trust — built over decades — is now enabling deep collaboration in AI, digital infrastructure, and startups.

Why France is India's Most Trusted Western Partner

- Several factors make France uniquely valuable for India among Western nations.
- France's tradition of strategic autonomy within the Western alliance aligns naturally with India's own non-alignment and multi-alignment foreign policy.
- France does not lecture India on domestic matters. It supported India during Pokhran-II when others imposed sanctions.
- It has never used bilateral ties as leverage for political pressure. And it has consistently championed India's voice in global forums — from the G8 to the G7 — recognising India's role as a leading voice of the Global South.

Conclusion

- In a world where geopolitical alignments shift with every election and every crisis, India-France ties stand out for their **remarkable consistency and depth**.
- Built not on compulsion or convenience but on genuine strategic trust, this partnership offers India exactly what it needs — a Western ally that neither lectures nor limits, but enables.

Source: **IE** | **MEA**

Source: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/india-france-relations-strategic-partnership/>

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