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PM Modi's France visit begins today: From AI Summit to boosting ties, what's on the agenda?

India's relationship with France is old and deep, based on the principles of strategic autonomy and mutual respect. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Paris as co-chair of the AI Summit is testimony to the endurance of the relationship, and its positive evolution in a changing world.

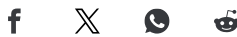
Written by [Shubhajit Roy](#) [Follow](#)

New Delhi | Updated: February 10, 2025 18:57 IST



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Prime Minister Narendra Modi emplanes for Paris, France, in New Delhi. (PMO via PTI Photo)

"I believe that France cannot continue to be France if it leaves its role in the world by the wayside", French President Emmanuel Macron wrote in his memoir,



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PM Modi's France visit begins today: What's on the agenda?



Revolution, in 2017.

As chair of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) **Action Summit in Paris on February 11**, the President would be trying to fulfil this obligation. And he has invited Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** to co-chair the Summit, offering India an important part in the effort to make and shape the rules for technologies on the next frontier.

Back in 1998, speaking in **New Delhi**'s Vigyan Bhawan, President Jacques Chirac first proposed the idea of "a partnership for the 21st century" with India, "a global partnership grounded in our complementarities and our common interests".

The two countries have travelled a significant distance on that high road since then.

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India at AI summit

The invitation to India to co-chair the AI Summit is being seen as a recognition of New Delhi's approach to AI, and its expanding role in the domain of new and emerging technologies. While China is a global leader in this breakthrough technology, the choice made by Paris signals the importance it attaches to shared values and convergences.

India's Strategic Partnership with France is its oldest, and the two countries have stood together in addressing a range of global issues. In 2015, they launched the **International Solar Alliance** on the sidelines of the Paris climate conference, and they are co-chairs of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI). Together, they have made significant contributions to writing the code for a green and sustainable planet; they are now collaborating to mark the contours of development in the digital world.

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The Summit, which is likely to be attended by United States Vice President J D Vance, Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Guoqing, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, will provide India with a platform to contribute towards the development of AI in an inclusive, responsible, and equitable manner, and to address associated risks and issues of ethics, governance, and accessibility.

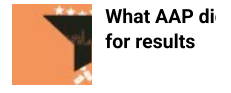
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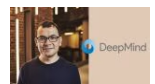
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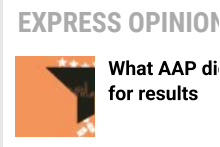
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India will share its views on the democratisation of AI, and on bringing its benefits to the Global South.

Aims of AI Summit

The Paris Summit will seek to build on the two summits held in the United Kingdom in November 2023 and South Korea in May 2024.

The **Bletchley Park Declaration** signed at the AI Safety Summit, which was attended by 28 countries, affirmed that AI should be designed, developed, deployed, and used in a manner that is safe, human-centric, trustworthy, and responsible.

The Seoul Summit, co-hosted by the UK, was attended by 27 nations. The Seoul Declaration reaffirmed their commitment to international cooperation on AI, and to addressing the challenges and opportunities presented by the new technology. The Seoul Summit also proposed a network of AI Safety Institutes.

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The Paris Summit has five main themes: Public Interest AI, Future of Work, Innovation and Culture, Trust in AI, and Global AI Governance. It will aim to leverage existing initiatives and fora on AI, including by the United Nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI), the G7, and G20.

The Summit will launch concrete initiatives to place AI at the service of the common good, with specific focus on the needs of the Global South. India has been actively engaged in a range of discussions, including co-chairing the AI Governance Working Group, participating in deliberations of other working groups to shape deliverables, serving on the Steering Committee, contributing to negotiations on the Leaders' Statement, and participating in the GPAI (Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence) Ministerial Meeting on the Summit sidelines.

New Delhi's focus

India will be putting forward the **example of the IndiaAI Mission**. The Rs 10,371 crore program of "Making AI in India and Making AI for India" aims to democratise AI innovation and ensure that its benefits are equitably distributed to all citizens.

On the global cooperation on AI, India is focused on three main areas:

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GPAI: This is an OECD-supported multi-stakeholder initiative to guide the responsible development and use of AI. As a founding member and lead chair of GPAI for 2024, India has been working towards making GPAI the nodal partnership for global cooperation on AI.

BRIDGING THE AI DIVIDE: India is pushing for inclusive AI Governance focused on bridging the widening AI divide between countries, and democratising AI

globally.

GLOBAL SOUTH PRIORITIES: India is advocating the empowerment of voices from the Global South in the discourse around cooperation on AI, spotlighting the unique challenges, opportunities, and requirements of the developing world.

India-France ties

The Prime Minister's visit will be an occasion to further deepen the India-France strategic partnership. The PM shares a warm personal equation with President Macron, and the two leaders met thrice in 2024, with the President attending the Republic Day celebrations as Chief Guest.

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Strategic ties between the countries have traditionally pivoted on areas such as defence, security, space, and civil nuclear energy collaboration. In particular, India and France have a strong and robust defence partnership with an increasing indigenous element. Their defence cooperation is reviewed under the Annual Defence Dialogue (Defence Minister level) and the High Committee on Defence Cooperation (Secretary level).

Major ongoing defence-related projects include the purchase of Rafale aircraft and the P-75 Scorpene Project. The two countries are discussing buying 26 Rafale-M fighter jets for the Indian Navy's aircraft carriers and three more Scorpene-class conventional submarines.

The French have always assured that the element of "Make in India" and "transfer of technology" that they offer is something their competitors don't. What adds a layer is that Paris is also training Indians to use the technology at the optimum level, and not just handover the blueprints of the technology shared.

Other potential areas of collaboration being pursued are co-development of next generation engines for fighter planes. An office of DRDO has also been opened in the Indian Embassy in 2023 for strengthening the technology cooperation between India and France.

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The bilateral ties are also now expanding into the sectors of tech, innovation, renewable energy, trade, economy, supply-chain partnership, and people-to-people relations. The logo of India-France Innovation Year, 2026, will be unveiled during the PM's visit. The two leaders will jointly inaugurate a new Indian Consulate in Marseille, which will strengthen people-to-people ties and boost the economic partnership.

Marseille is also a global communications hub, with its strategic location on the Mediterranean Sea making it a key node for the network of undersea cables linking Europe to Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Ninety-nine per cent of the world's data traffic, both Internet and telephony, is carried by submarine cables.

Modi and Macron will also hold an India-France CEOs' forum in Paris. With its history of innovation, technological strength, and niche expertise in several fields, France is an important partner in Make in India programs, especially in areas of renewable energy, defence, start-ups, advanced manufacturing, critical minerals, and pharma.

EXPRESS OPINION



What AAP di
for results

An initiative on India-France Triangular Development Cooperation is likely to be launched during the visit, through which India and France will aim to implement climate- and SDGs-focused projects in third countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

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Macron and Modi will visit the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) facilities close to Marseille. India, which is an active participant in the fusion technology project, has very significant energy requirements to fulfil its development goals.

Enduring partnership

Ties between India and France have evolved on the basis of “strategic autonomy” and a “sense of respect”. President Chirac had been India’s Republic Day Guest in 1998, months before New Delhi conducted the Pokhran II nuclear tests – and afterward, France refused to join the chorus of global condemnation and Western sanctions aimed at punishing India for its action. The same Chirac had agreed to be the Republic Day Guest as France’s Prime Minister in 1976, when India had been shunned by much of the world due to Indira Gandhi’s Emergency.

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These actions were testimony to French pragmatism, foresight, and commitment to the relationship with India, as well as to the management of sensitive diplomatic situations. Bilateral ties have become even more durable and stronger since then.



Shubhajit Roy

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Shubhajit Roy, Diplomatic Editor at The Indian Express, has been a journalist for more than 25 years now. Roy joined The Indian Express in October 2003 and has been

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