

India needs its rightful place: Modi's UNSC pitch

Red carpet welcome in Paris; Modi to address Indian community members

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Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said that India as the world's largest democracy has demonstrated that it is possible for harmony to exist amid diversity. The PM said India, now the most populous country, "needs to regain its rightful place", in a strong push for permanent membership of the country in the UN Security Council (UNSC).

After landing in Paris, Modi received a warm welcome upon his arrival at the meeting hall to hold talks with French Senate President Gerard Larcher. "PM @narendramodi had a productive meeting with Mr. @gerard_larcher, President of @Senat, in Paris. They deliberated on a range of issues of mutual interest and agreed to work together to deepen India-France cooperation in a number of areas," the prime minister's office tweeted.

In a special gesture, French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne received Prime Minister Modi at the airport. A ceremonial welcome and Guard of honour were accorded to Modi upon his arrival at the airport. Modi will also address the Indian community members here.

Ahead of his departure from Delhi, Modi told French newspaper *Les Echos* in an interview that India's young and skilled workforce is steeped in openness and democratic values, and is eager to embrace technology and adapt to the changing world.

"When many countries in the world are ageing and their populations are shrinking, India's young and skilled workforce will be an asset for the world over the decades to come. As the world's largest democracy with unparalleled social and economic diversity, our success will demonstrate that democracy delivers. That



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being welcomed by Indian community members upon his arrival in Paris on Thursday

PHOTO: PTI

it is possible for harmony to exist amidst diversity," he said.

The progress of one-sixth of humanity will give the world a more prosperous and sustainable future, he said replying to a question on how India's status changes globally with the country becoming the most populous country. "Our deeply held values of peace, openness, harmony and co-existence; the success of our vibrant democracy; the extraordinary richness of our culture, traditions and philosophy; a consistent voice for the cause of a peaceful, fair and just world; and, our commitment to international law and peace, are the reasons that India's rise is welcomed not feared in the world."

Modi asserted that he will rather describe it as India

regaining its rightful place in the world as, since time immemorial, India has been at the forefront of contributing to global economic growth, technological advancement and human development.

"Our demographic dividend, our deep roots in democracy, and our civilizational spirit will guide the way as we move towards the future. We recognize our responsibility in contributing to addressing global challenges, building a more cohesive world, giving voice to the aspirations of the weak and advancing global peace and prosperity," he said.

There is a global recognition today that India is a force of good in the world and indispensable for global unity, cohesion, peace and prosperity at a

time of great turmoil and risks of fragmentation in the world, the prime minister said.

Our capabilities and resources will continue to be directed towards the larger good of humanity, not to raise claims against others or challenge the international order, he added. Asked about his views of what are India's soft power, he said the country's exports have never been war and subjugation, but yoga, ayurveda, spirituality, science, mathematics, and astronomy.

To a question about the growth in the relationship between India and the US, he said their ties have been growing positively since the turn of the century and have accelerated and reached new levels in the past nine years.

Big-ticket acquisition of 26 Rafale jets gets DAC nod

AJAI SHUKLA
New Delhi, 13 July

With Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi embarking on Thursday from Delhi for a two-day visit to France and the United Arab Emirates, his Ministry of Defence (MoD) cleared three important proposals for the capital acquisition of high-technology defence equipment. "A meeting of the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC), held under the chairmanship of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, approved three proposals on July 13 (Thursday)," announced the MoD in New Delhi.

Rafale Marine fighters

"The DAC granted acceptance of necessity (AoN) for the procurement of 26 Rafale Marine (Rafale-M) aircraft, along with ancillary equipment, weapons, simulators, spares, documentation, crew training, and logistic support for the Indian Navy from the French government based on an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA)," said the MoD.

This amounts to the Navy selecting the Rafale-M in its tender for 26 multi-role carrier-based fighters (MRCBFs), for which a request for information had been sent to two vendors: Dassault for the Rafale-M and Boeing for its F/A-18E/F Super Hornet.

By choosing the Rafale-M, the Navy has effectively ensured that it will not get a twin-seat naval fighter since the Rafale Marine does not come in a twin-seat version. Of the 26 MRCBFs being bought in the first tranche, eight twin-seaters will not go into combat operations. They will be available for training pilots ashore but not for combat missions flown from the carrier deck. Possibly, the Indian military might use the Rafale-M in combat, but only from onshore bases. This restriction would not be there for the Super Hornets. If they are selected, all of them — single-seat as well as twin-seat versions — would be capable of flying combat missions from the Navy's aircraft carriers.

In addition, the procurement of Super Hornets for the role of MRCBFs would ensure a high degree of interoperability between the aircraft carrier, the onboard



The Indian military might use the Rafale Marine in combat, but only from on-shore bases. This restriction would not be there for the Super Hornets

PHOTO: PTI

Super Hornets, and several other platforms that the Indian military has bought or is buying. These platforms include the F/A-18F Growler electronic warfare aircraft, shipborne MH-60R Seahawk helicopters, the P-8I Poseidon long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft, and the Sea Guardian long-range drones. They are used to working together after years of coordination in exercises like Malabar.

In 2015, in remarkably similar circumstances, the PM bought 36 Rafale aircraft through an IGA between Paris and New Delhi. The 2015 IGA led to the signing a year later of a €7.8 billion contract for delivering 36 Rafale fighters over three years.

"The price and other terms of purchase will be negotiated with the French government after taking into account all relevant aspects, including the comparative procurement price of similar aircraft by other countries," said the Indian MoD.

The 2016 Rafale contract catered for special features, termed 'India-specific equipment', to be fitted onto the 36 Rafales that India bought. These features were developed by Rafales' two original equipment manufacturers: French companies Dassault and Thales. The India-specific equipment is also being fitted into the Rafale-M fighters being bought. The MoD announcement says: "Further, integration of Indian-designed equipment and establishment of a maintenance, repair, and operations hub for various systems will be incorporated into the contract documents after due negotiations.

Three more Scorpène submarines

In an unexpected announcement, the DAC also granted an AoN for the construction by Mumbai-based Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders (MDL) of three additional Scorpène submarines under the buy (Indian) category. "The procurement of (three) additional submarines, with higher indigenous content, will not only help in maintaining the required force level and operational readiness of the Navy but also create significant employment opportunities in the domestic sector. It will help the MDL in enhancing its capability and expertise in submarine construction."

MDL is completing the construction of six Scorpène submarines with conventional propulsion. The MoD is planning to enhance its capability by fitting them with air-independent propulsion. This is being achieved by retrofitting all six Scorpènes in turn with an AIP pack developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation. It is unclear if the three additional Scorpène submarines will be fitted ab initio with DRDO's indigenous AIP or whether they will be recycled in turn through MDL.

In a third sanction, the DAC approved a proposal to lay down guidelines for achieving the desired indigenous content in all categories of capital acquisition cases. "It will help in achieving atmanirbharta in critical manufacturing technologies and life-cycle sustenance of defence platforms and equipment through indigenous manufacturing," announced the MoD.