

France a 'crucial' partner for Aatmanirbhar Bharat: Modi

PM takes part in Bastille Day parade, says two countries agreed to launch UPI in France

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Cooperation in building small and modular nuclear reactors, India manufacturing warships, submarines, and helicopter engines with French assistance and more robust space cooperation were to form part of his discussions with French President Emmanuel Macron, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Friday.

Addressing a joint press conference before the start of their talks, Modi said the two countries agreed to launch India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) in France and deepen their technology cooperation as they celebrate the 25th anniversary of their strategic partnership and draw the road map for the next 25 years. Modi said defence ties were the foundation of India-France relations and that the French were crucial partners for 'make in India' and 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'.

"I welcome the long-term agreement between Indian Oil and France's Total company to export Liquefied natural gas (LNG). It will help achieve our



Prime Minister Narendra Modi being conferred with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, France's highest civilian and military honour, by French President Emmanuel Macron PHOTO: PTI

clean energy transition target."

He said India would open a new consulate in the city of Marseille. The PM welcomed the decision to grant long-term visas to people of Indian origin studying in France. "I invite French universities to set up their campuses in India," he

said. On the concluding day of his two-day visit, the two leaders were also scheduled to meet top business leaders as part of the India-France CEO Forum. Modi said France would partner in developing the new National Museum in New Delhi. The PM said the

impact of the Covid pandemic and the Ukraine conflict had been felt worldwide but more acutely by the Global South. The PM said India was a votary of resolution through dialogue on the Ukraine conflict.

Earlier in the day, the Indian PM joined French President Macron for the Bastille Day parade as the guest of honour. Rafale fighter jets of the Indian Air Force (IAF), French jets, and an Indian tri-services marching contingent were part of French National Day celebrations. The two sides are slated to sign agreements to strengthen their strategic partnership, signed in 1998, with India purchasing 26 Rafale Mariner jets and ancillary equipment. France was India's first strategic partner.

On Thursday, the French president conferred Modi with the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honour, France's highest civilian and military honour. Modi is the first Indian PM to receive the award. He received the recognition at the Elysee Palace. Earlier, the French president and First Lady Brigitte Macron hosted a private dinner for Modi. The PM addressed the Indian diaspora and announced an agreement to

use UPI in France.

On the sidelines of the PM's visit, French space sector firm Promethee on Friday said it was exploring the possibility of placing its nanosatellites in orbit using the Vikram series of launch vehicles being developed by Indian start-up Skyroot Aerospace. Skyroot co-founder Pawan Kumar Chandana held discussions with Promethee President Olivier Piepsz. At the Bastille Day parade, the 241-member Indian tri-services contingent marched to the tune of *saare jahan se achcha* to mark the 25th anniversary of the India-France Strategic Partnership. A military band also participated in the parade.

Macron gifted Modi a framed facsimile of a 1916 photograph of a Parisian presenting flowers to a Sikh officer and a replica of the Charlemagne chessmen, dating back to the 11th Century. Macron also gifted Modi a series of novels — *A la recherche du temps perdu* (*In Search of Lost Time*) — by Marcel Proust, published between 1913 and 1927 and considered the most important works of French literature of the early 20th Century.