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Discours du Président de la République à l’occasion du lancement de l'année franco-indienne de l'innovation

Honorable Prime Minister, dear Narendra Modi,

Honorable ministers, members of parliament, ambassadors, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

First of all, Mr. Prime Minister, thank you very much for traveling from Delhi to welcome me and my delegation here in Mumbai and being present for this session. Our discussion today, your presence here, means a lot and speaks to the long-standing friendship between our two countries and our personal friendship. Thank you very much for that.

Mumbai, the city of dreams, a city in perpetual motion, reaching toward the future. I cannot think a of better place to launch what we are inaugurating today, the India-France Year of Innovation. But before I talk about the future, let me start with a fact about the present, not to be underestimated. The CEO of Alphabet is Indian. The CEO of Microsoft is Indian. The CEO of IBM is Indian. The CEO of Adobe is Indian. The CEO of Palo Alto Networks is Indian. The CEO of Novartis is Indian. And the CEO of Chanel, one of the most iconic houses in France, is Leena Nair from Kolhapur, right here in the state. So… and if I would add to that, three months ago, Matthieu Blazy, Chanel's new creative director, chose a young woman from Hyderabad, Bhavitha Mandava, to open his show in New York. And she was the first Indian model to open the Chanel runway. She was discovered on the subway platform, and she walked into a subway station in front of the world. So India does not just participate in global innovation. India leads it, from Silicon Valley to the Champs-Élysées and from technology to culture. And that, dear Narendra, dear Prime Minister, is what this Year of Innovation celebrates, not a promise, but a reality.

Innovation is a driver of our economic growth. As highlighted by the French Nobel Prize laureate Philippe Aghion : "Innovation is also what enables us to address the great challenges of our time, from climate change to inequalities." And that is why we created the France 2030 plan to invest more than 50 billion euros in tomorrow's sectors, creating thousands of projects and almost 200,000 jobs. And I'm very proud here to have a unique French delegation with all the possible sectors, and from transports, port business, cement to AI. I mean, all the different sectors, energy, infrastructure, are covered here with a lot of innovative people. But innovation is never stronger than when it's shared. And India knows this better than anyone. During COVID in 2021, India ran the largest vaccination campaign in world history, 25 million doses administered in a single day, reaching 1 billion doses in just 9 months. And true to this philosophy, India built CoWIN, an open-source digital platform, and offered it to 142 countries so they could do the same.

To make science a lever for progress, France and India have been working hand in hand for years. And we've reinforced our technological sovereignty while supporting our national industries. And our partnership is strong, and it relies on countless joint projects.

In the field of defense, France is a steadfast partner of Make in India. Our high-level cooperation allows us to develop next-generation engines, multi-role helicopters, advanced combat aircrafts, submarines, etc. And I want to thank you warmly for the extraordinary confidence you've placed in this partnership. And this is not just a defense contract, but a series of defense contracts. We speak about what a sovereign alliance is. Two great nations choosing each other on land, at sea, and in the sky, not by default, but by conviction. And our cooperation is also crucial in the space sector. The development of the TRISHNA satellite shows what we can achieve when scientific excellence and industrial expertise are brought together. Thanks to this innovation, we will be able to better monitor and understand climate change. We do want to do much more in these sectors, defense, space, because especially space is a great sector in order to better understand our planet, to better monitor, obviously, communications, our defense activities and our sovereignty, a better understanding of climate change. And I want to complement here our scientists, labs and so on, working closely together in these sectors, especially when some others are withdrawing their effort.

Addressing climate change also means transforming the way we produce energy. France is supporting India's ambition to expand its access to decarbonized energy through large power reactors as well as the Small Modular Reactors. This year, we will develop a series of very important projects in this field. We launched 8 years ago together the Solar Alliance Initiative, working very well, by the way. We have a lot of civilian nuclear initiatives here in the country. This year, Airbus, we will develop a demonstrator for the production of sustainable aviation fuel, helping to accelerate the decarbonization of air transport in India, and I could mention a series of different initiatives like this one to illustrate the strengths and the depths of this partnership.

Our partnership is also guided by a shared conviction, that innovation is not just about major technological breakthrough, but also about the common good, about improving everyday life, about making it healthier and safer. This is the ambition behind initiatives such as the Farm to Plate project led by the French Institute in Pondicherry with the Vilavi Group. It will make it possible to track agricultural products at every stage and ensure their quality and protect consumers.

And let me also emphasize that innovation requires investing in the education and training of our people. If I mention the common good, the launch of the Franco-Indian Campus for Aeronautics is a beautiful opportunity for our countries to develop unique expertise. But this is based as well on a very strong partnership on education and research. And as we celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Indo-French Center for the Promotion of Advanced Research, I believe we also have a valuable opportunity to deepen our scientific and academic ties, which we will certainly discuss tomorrow in Delhi.

In Delhi, I will also meet artists and entrepreneurs to discuss another key aspect of our cooperation, which brings our countries closer : culture. French and Indian professionals are already working together to imagine new experiences for the future National Museum in Delhi and the Lothal Maritime Complex in Gujarat. And through Villa Swagatam, and soon our partnership with the Serenpidity foundation to the Arts, we will create new opportunities for artists to connect and create. I spent time with musicians, actors, producers today, I will spend time tomorrow with key players of our cultural links. And I can tell you that we have a series of unique opportunities to create value together, but to convey as well our stories to the rest of the world and advocate for a certain vision of this world based on cooperation and mutual respect.

Across all the sectors I mentioned, from defense to space, from health to culture, artificial intelligence plays a central role, enabling us to push the boundaries of innovation. AI holds the promise of improving pandemic prediction, transforming agriculture, opening new possibilities for artistic creations. In a few moments, an AI-generated work will be projected onto the Gateway of India as part of a production by the *Grand Palais Immersif*, a leading French institution in digital content and innovative immersive experiences. And this is just one of the many examples of AI's potential. A potential that France and India are determined to explore, but not without safeguards, not without carefully considering its consequences. To respect artists, to respect our children and teenagers, and to protect our democracies. This is the path we are striving to create together. An AI that is powerful, profitable, but also safe, inclusive, secure and democratic.

With this ambition, dear Narendra, we co-chaired the AI Action Summit in Paris last year and established a framework for our bilateral cooperation in these technologies. The Indo French Roadmap for AI. And I'm confident that the AI Impact Summit in which I will be taking part in two days' time, will allow us to continue moving forward together toward a better use of artificial intelligence. Let me conclude by here sharing 3 ambitions for 2026. First, to better connect our ecosystems in order to make life easier for researchers, entrepreneurs, students, investors who are willing to develop partnerships. Second, to multiply concrete projects that help us tackle the challenges of our time : climate, health, food security, clean mobility. Finally, we must ensure that this momentum continues well beyond 2026 and this is our common ambition. We must make this year of innovation the starting point for an unprecedented level of integration between our two knowledge-based economies. And it is speaking from aerospace, space, defense, agriculture, health, sustainable economy and creative and cultural industries. We can cover a lot of them.

To achieve these objectives, we need concrete tools. And the Indo French Innovation Network, presented a few minutes ago and launched today as part of this year, is specifically designed to be a constructive bridge between our two innovation ecosystems. I hope that all of you will find inspiration and enthusiasm for new projects. Projects that will bring progress and prosperity to our two nations and beyond. It is no coincidence that the spirit of innovation is at the core of our respective presidencies, your presidency of the BRICS and the French presidency of the G7. Innovation is a value we hold dear, one that we champion in multilateral forums, convinced that it is by forging new ties and joining our strengths that we can shape the solutions to the challenges of the century. And this is why, following your proposal, Mr. Prime Minister, we will have this Innovation Day the day before the G7, together, led by franco-indian initiatives, with a lot of students and researchers that we will bring together.

I started with the names of those who led and lead global innovation today. Many of them were born here in India. The question is no longer whether India innovates. The question is : “who will innovate with India ?” and France is the only clear answer. We are here, we want to be here with you. And we are not leaving. “*Jai Ho*”, as we say in the famous movie. So long live the Indo-French relationship. Thank you very much.