

"India's 75th Independence Day: "Our confident look to the future" - Ambassador Jawed Ashraf

India has come a long way since its independence on 15 August 1947. And in the coming decades, New Delhi will assume all its responsibilities on the international scene, in partnership with Paris, argues Jawed Ashraf, India's ambassador to France.

On 15 August, India celebrates 75 years of independence - an important step in the journey of the world's largest democracy, heir to an ancient civilisation and a unique diversity. Since independence, our population has grown from 350 million to 1.35 billion. There are 22 official languages, with different scripts, and hundreds of dialects. All major world religions are integrated into society and have constitutional guarantees. We have a federal structure of 28 states and 8 union territories. We encourage diversity and our unity is deepening.

India is the fifth largest economy in the world and growing rapidly. The country is a major producer of agricultural products, the sixth largest manufacturing economy, a major producer of pharmaceuticals, a nuclear and space power and a leader in digital payments and open digital infrastructure support, creating the third largest start-up ecosystem in the world. India has helped deliver over two billion doses of Covid vaccines. We maintain the security of our borders and the freedom of the seas. We have consistently fulfilled our international responsibilities - strengthening global institutions and promoting peace through fair deals for all and a sustainable future.

Much remains to be done to fulfil the promise of our independence and the aspirations of our people. But we are confident in our recent progress, our demographics, our businesses. By 2047, our 100th birthday, India will be among the top three economies and, as Prime Minister Narendra Modi has said, that economy will be inclusive and equitable; a democratic horizon that belongs to citizens of all faiths.

As the standard bearer of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam's ethos of 'the world as one family', India will seek to be a bridge in an increasingly fragmented world and be part of the solutions to global challenges.

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France will be a major partner in our progress and international efforts. Our two countries share a strategic partnership characterised by seven decades of trust, goodwill and extraordinary reliability. Our commitment to democracy, strategic autonomy, international law and multilateralism is a solid foundation for a deep partnership in this emerging multipolar world.

India sees France and the European Union as key partners in promoting a stable, peaceful and prosperous Indo-Pacific, free from conflict and coercion. Similarly, our partnership will help address new threats, from the seabed to space and cyberspace. By jointly leading the 100+ member International Solar Alliance, India and France have mobilised around a major global challenge. Our focus now extends to green hydrogen, health, sustainable use of our oceans, plastic pollution and biodiversity. We see exciting opportunities to build digital sovereignty and create public digital commons that reflect our values and catalyse opportunities for our people.

Wars and inequalities in the face of pressing challenges are eroding international cohesion. India and France are helping to rebuild the global compact, restore law-based order and revitalise international institutions. To restore faith in multilateralism, we will also need to keep our promises to the most vulnerable on health, climate, food, energy and debt.

And, just as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of India's independence with our friends, we know that our journey will be made easier by the support of strong partnerships, like the one we have with France.

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