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4th ORF Kalpana Chawla Space Policy Dialogue CNES builds bridges between French and Indian NewSpace

Friday 16 February in New Delhi, CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall took part in the 4th ORF Kalpana Chawla Space Policy Dialogue. This yearly event has established itself as a neutral and open forum to discuss the Indian space sector's competitiveness and its position in the international space arena.

Invited to speak by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF), Jean-Yves Le Gall underlined the importance that CNES attaches to working more closely with new space players, in particular India, today one of the world's major NewSpace development hubs. Citing the partnerships that CNES has engaged with several Indian start-ups, he described a symbiotic relationship through which traditional agencies should be seeking to help the NewSpace players that are set to become the future drivers of the space industry. By working with CNES, these young private Indian newcomers are nurturing particularly promising ties with French players that will prove profitable to both ecosystems.

CNES's President also pointed to the pioneering climate-monitoring missions France and India have worked on together, which have served as a model in this domain. Two French-Indian satellites already in orbit, Megha-Tropiques and SARAL-AltiKa, are providing precious data for climate research and operational applications like monsoon forecasting, food security and water resource management. They will be joined later this year by the joint Oceansat 3 - Argos mission, while studies for a future thermal infrared satellite are going to step up a gear.

On the sidelines of this event, Jean-Yves Le Gall met his Indian counterpart K. Sivan, recently appointed as the new Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) and Head of the Department of Space. Their discussions confirmed India's desire to boost cooperation between CNES and ISRO in new areas of interest like launchers, as well as CNES's participation in future Indian missions to Mars. The two agency heads also took the opportunity to lay the groundwork for the space thread of President Emmanuel Macron's forthcoming state visit to India. The first space cooperation agreement between France and India dates back to 1964 and space cooperation is also one of the pillars of the strategic dialogue between the two nations.

After these meetings, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "Space cooperation between France and India is exceptional in its longevity and in the series of successes we have accomplished together. Our relationship works very well because we complement one another, and that is why building the same bridges between new private players is likely to prove a fantastic opportunity."

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