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CNES and ISRO set to step up cooperation

CNES President Jean-Yves Le Gall and A.S. Kiran Kumar, Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO), met Friday 27 February in Bangalore to discuss future long-term space cooperation between France and India, and ways in which it could be stepped up.

This was the first meeting between Jean-Yves Le Gall and A.S. Kiran Kumar since the latter's appointment as ISRO Chairman in January. Previously Director of ISRO's Space Applications Centre (SAC) and already a key partner of CNES, A.S. Kiran Kumar has played a pivotal role in the Megha-Tropiques and SARAL-AltiKa programmes and for this reason attaches a great deal of importance to the close historic ties between CNES and ISRO.

In particular, Mr Le Gall and Mr Kiran Kumar laid the groundwork for space-related aspects of the forthcoming state visit of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi to France. On this occasion, a new CNES-ISRO cooperation agreement is expected to be signed, superseding the previous agreement of 1993 and covering domains such as the launch of an Argos 4 instrument on the Indian Oceansat satellite, phase 0 studies for a joint thermal infrared mission and CNES's involvement in an Indian mission to Mars. The extension of the Megha-Tropiques memorandum of understanding beyond its nominal term is also scheduled to be signed.

Mr Le Gall and Mr Kiran Kumar then discussed the possibilities for stepping up cooperation between CNES and ISRO, whose historic collaboration in space is much more than just a technical partnership. Indeed, France was closely involved in conceiving India's family of launchers, a fact commemorated recently by the award of the Padma Shri to Professor Jacques-Emile Blamont, who has been an advisor to every CNES President since the agency's inception.

After the meeting, Jean-Yves Le Gall commented: "Our strong ties with India are built around the bilateral cooperation and unique relationship of trust we have built over 50 years, and I am delighted to see A.S. Kiran Kumar now heading ISRO. CNES has partnered ISRO since the start of India's space programme and we are extremely proud to have contributed to the development of its launchers. Space cooperation between our two nations is set to be stepped up in the future and we look forward to writing new chapters in space history with India."

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