French President Visits India

What is the issue?

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- French President Emmanuel Macron is currently on bilateral visit to India.
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- Agreements on deepening mutual cooperation across sectors like - Defence, Solar and Nuclear Power were sealed.
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What are the major outcomes?

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- The pioneering agreement for “India-France strategic partnership” was signed in 1998, and relationships have been in good shape since.
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- Currently, a “Joint Vision Statement” on the Indian Ocean Region was issued, which clearly aimed at countering China’s growing presence in the region.
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- A “reciprocal logistics support” agreement (Defence) was also signed, which is an indication of the diversifying strategic partnerships for both countries.
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- While multiple previous deadlines have slipped, a recommitment for starting the “Jaitapur nuclear power plant” has now been made.
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- Commitments towards the “International Solar Alliance” (ISA) and joint ventures on climate change cooperation were reiterated.
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How prospective is the “International Solar Alliance” (ISA)?

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- ISA was proposed jointly by India and France in the backdrop the “Paris

Climate Talks" or CoP 21.
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- With 61 countries already onboard the ISA, India and France are clearly promising an alternative leadership model for the less developed world.
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- This is significant in the face of U.S. pullout from the Paris Climate Accord and the greater vulnerability of poorer countries to climate change.
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- ISA is oriented towards sunshine countries (between the tropics), and it focuses on Project financing and technical assistance.
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- While it has been estimated that $1 trillion is needed to meet the ISA targets, India and France have thus far committed $1.4 billion and $1.3 billion, respectively.
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- **Challenges -** India's solar power tariff is around Rs. 2.40 a unit, which makes Solar a costly option domestically.
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- While India has targeted a solar capacity addition of over 100 GWs by 2022, this seems unviable unless various solar components become cheaper.
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- Also, addition of new thermal power plants (as they produce more stable output) is a hindrance to solar deployment.
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How does the future of ties look?

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- While there is scope for bilateral navel and intelligence cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region, it is majorly symbolic than substantive.
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- As two pluralistic democracies with a firm belief in a multi-polar world order, India and France have numerous strategic convergences.
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- Multiple practical considerations do hinder greater Indo-French ties in the international arena, but the sentiments are positive and needs to be sustained.
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Source: The Hindu

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