

## France ready to help India with n-power:French envoy

France is keen to expand ties with India and the French model of nuclear energy and water privatisation 'can be successfully replicated in India', said Jerome Bonnafont, French ambassador to India, here Friday.

He added that France is also trying to speed up the issuance of visas for businessmen and promote French universities and higher education institutions among Indian students.

During his special address at a Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) meet here Friday, Bonnafont said that France gets more than 40 percent of its energy requirement from its nuclear plants. 'This helps the country to achieve self reliance in energy without getting affected by the fluctuations in oil prices in the international market,' he said.

France has developed third generation nuclear technologies. 'Thanks to nuclear technology, our carbon dioxide emissions are drastically low,' the envoy added.

The 10th Indo-French bilateral naval exercise 'Varuna 08' began Friday off the coast of Vishakapatnam, on the east coast.

The series of such exercises between France and India began in 2001. The 'Varuna' series of bilateral exercise is a symbol of the growing co-operation between India and France.

The French fleet contingent contains the Landing Platform Dock, 'Mistral', which is reported to be nuclear-powered and capable of carrying warheads.

The assault ship is accompanied by missile frigates and stealth ships. 'Mistral' is capable of deploying 16 NH 90 medium helicopters and helicopters such as the CH-53E super stallion. It can ferry a whole armed battalion with 13 heavy tanks and 70 vehicles and has four landing barges.

The envoy will be visiting the 'Mistral'.

The French guided missile destroyer 'Dupleix', along with an embedded Royal Navy frigate 'Westminster', are also taking part in the exercise.

The French have brought the nuclear-powered carrier vessel Charles de Gaulle and nuclear submarines to earlier joint exercises in Indian waters.

India's own nuclear submarine station is at Rambilli, off Vishakhapatnam coast.

The French naval flotilla is due to make a port of call in [Chennai](#) this weekend.

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