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Bengaluru, Nov 19, 2014, DHNS:

French Ambassador to India Francois Richier heaped fulsome praise on Isro for its successful launch of the Mars Orbiter Mission.

"What a success?, what a success? I know it is a matter of pride for the whole country. You should know that I am a fan of Indian space. India is a first class space nation. The Mars mission is a living national treasure for India," he said, speaking at fourth Bengaluru Space Expo on Wednesday.

Next to the US, he said, India was the second partner for CNES, the French space agency and European Space Agency was perhaps the oldest partner of Isro.

"We have had 50 years of co-operation in space and not once has anything been called into question. That's how solid and good the relationship is. It began way back in 1964 when Homi Bhabha was heralding the space programme of India. I am also aware how Vikram Sarabhai laid the foundation for Indian space. I was with former president Abdul Kalam and Sarabhai in a room close to a church in Trivandrum when they were preparing a vision document for India's space endeavours."

Archaic verse

He referred to a Sanskrit phrase, "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" - which says that the world is a family.

"I too believe in that. India works not just for national interest, but for the poorest, like fishermen. The space programme in India impacts millions of people with its focus on development. I believe there is more to come from India."

Richier disclosed that India's Prime Minister had an ambitious programme in mind and that he would reveal it.

"I also like the Make in India concept. France has been making in India for the last 50 years. France has invested \$19 billion so far and generated three lakh skilled jobs in India. The per capita investment in the civilian space sector by France is second only to the US. India has the objective of maintaining peaceful space and we too have peace as the key driver of the programme. The European and Indian space programmes are deep and so we will converge on that too."

Exhaustive deals

In a lighter vein, he said referring to agreements: "In the past, it would take just one page or sheet to secure an agreement. I don't know why it takes 50 pages now. But our 50 year old relationship will only get better."

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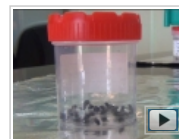
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