Syllabus subtopic: Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Prelims and Mains focus: about India- France cooperation and its significance; Indo-France ties

News: India and France will work together in the field of museums, cultural spaces and research, and a joint working group will be established for this purpose, the Ministry of Culture said.

Task of the working group

- The working group would explore partnership between the National Museum in Delhi and a French counterpart to be designated by the French government.

- The first meeting of this group would be held before April 30. The Ministers opened an exhibition of works by French artist Gerard Garouste at the National Gallery of Modern Art.

India-France historical ties

- In the 17th century, the French East India Company established trading posts at Pondicherry, Chandernagore, Mahé, Karaikal and Yanam. In the Indian sub-continent, France was the dominant colonial power between the 17th and the 18th century.

- However, following the 1763 Paris Treaty, French power in India declined, restraining the French presence in India to five settlements. These were returned to India in 1962 under Delhi Treaty of 1954. Today, Pondicherry is the most visible historical heritage of that legacy and is an important French cultural and academic centre till date.

- The suppression of French influence in India was inevitable with the adoption
of the British method of administration and education. A significant English domination of Indian thought and practices is still prevalent despite several years of Independence.

- In fact, India still makes a significant contribution to maintenance of the British Commonwealth War Graves, even though the contribution of Indian soldiers was muted till very recently. The French, more than the British, are responsible for modernising the Indian forces. This can be evidenced by the performance in the interstate wars in the colonial era.

- Both the countries have had deep relations with mutual influences and dependencies that go back nearly 300 years.

- Many French intellectuals such as Michelet, Cuvier, Anquetil-Duperon, Burnouff, Renan and Taine among many others recognised the richness of Indian culture and philosophy and brought it to the western audiences.

- Fascinated by India and "Indian exoticism", there was an eagerness to learn oriental languages. The first school of oriental languages was established in Paris in 1795, with a chair in Sanskrit in 1812 at the College de France, Paris. Even today, one of the largest collections of Indian manuscripts and artefacts outside India is with the Bibliothèque nationale de France and in private collections.

- Both countries share similar orientations in foreign policy that is realist and not confined to alliances.

- The symbiotic relationship has stood the test of time as for several years after India’s Independence, France was the preferred nation next to the Soviet Union in terms of defence purchases. More importantly, relations between the countries conspicuously defied Cold War tensions, with the French continuing to supply spare parts to Indian military, contrary to the stance of USA and UK in the sanctions period.
Note: to read about Indo-French relations in detail, click on the link given below:

https://in.ambafrance.org/Indo-French-relations-12465