

**Press Conference with Mr Thierry Mariani, French Minister of Transport
on the occasion of his visit to India**

New Delhi, 24 February 2012

Mr Thierry Mariani, Hon'ble French Minister for Transport, was on a three-day visit to India from 24 to 27 February 2012.

The relations between France and India in general as well as in the sector of transport are excellent. Thus, he was here to meet the Indian Ministers of Railways, Civil Aviation, Urban Development.

During his interaction with the press in New Delhi on Friday 24 March, Mr Mariani, highlighted that this was the second time that he had come to India in as many years.

Mr Mariani had a fruitful meeting with Shri Dinesh Trivedi, who said that safety was a priority for Indian Railways and expressed his interest in the French model, especially the EPSF. The EPSF is a hundred-percent independent body for regulating and monitoring railway safety, which gives clearance for rail track links and rolling stock. France has proven expertise in railway safety: for its high-speed trains, there has been no accidents for over 30 years, and for the older, classic lines, no incident for over twenty years.

Thus, the prospects of the long-term project of high-speed trains, and the renovation of existing railway tracks were discussed. There are three high-speed train projects that India is currently working on. The French company Systra has been selected for conducting a feasibility study for the Mumbai-Pune-Ahmedabad segment.

Ties between French and Indian companies in this sector, and cooperation for the construction of railway tracks were also explored. Should big projects be on the anvil, French majors, like Alstom, could envisage setting up production units.

Mr Mariani elaborated on France's wide expertise in all the four types of public rail transport: high-speed trains, long-distance trains, the metro, and the inter-urban trains. He pointed out that the last category could be especially interesting for India, where sprawling suburbs are developing rapidly around major metropolises.

With regard to financing, he indicated that France would fund the feasibility and engineering studies for the Bangalore metro, through the French Development Agency (AFD), to the tune of 110 million euros, which accounts for 10% of the total project cost. Should the Indian authorities so desire, this could be replicated for other projects, regardless of who is ultimately awarded the construction project.

He further explained that France also encourages the PPP model, which has proven to be very successful with most big infrastructure projects in France being financed thus. He also recalled that the Hon'ble Minister of Urban Development, Mr Kamal Nath, and he himself had participated in a seminar on PPPs last year in Delhi, with another one scheduled in September this year.

With regard to road transport, Mr Mariani noted that France and India have longstanding cooperation in this area. France has succeeded in significantly reducing the number of road casualties, and could offer help in this matter as well as infrastructure development. He added that a framework cooperation for road safety, in fact, exists, between France and India for exchange of expertise and good practices, and meetings between high-level officials.

With Shri Ajit Singh, Mr Mariani raised the matter of Delhi and Mumbai – the only ones among the top 15 world airports – not permitting Airbus A380 aircraft to land at their airports. Cooperation in the helicopter sector was also on the agenda as there are significant ties between Eurocopter and the Indian civil aviation industry.

Mr Mariani also explained that he is also a candidate for the French Legislative elections to represent the interests of French citizens living in the Asia-Pacific region, thus including India. It was President Nicolas Sarkozy who decided to have dedicated members of parliament for this mission as well as appoint a Minister for French Citizens Abroad, Mr Edouard Courtial, who visited Pondicherry in the wake of cyclone Thane. He further added that, in a globalised world, diasporas were an asset, who vehicled the image of their country, and as such, France considered it important to extend its support to the French community abroad.