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### **French President François Hollande's visit to India – highlight on Indo-French collaboration in Science and Technology**



Nine months after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to France, in April 2015, French President François Hollande visited India on 24<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> January 2016. This was on the occasion of India's 67<sup>th</sup> Republic Day celebrations, where he was invited as Guest of Honour.

It was his second State Visit to India.

**On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> January, President François Hollande and Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited the Government Museum and Art Gallery in Chandigarh**, located in the heart of the city designed by French architect Le Corbusier. The two leaders were guided through a special exhibition by Dr Mukesh Singh, president of the Society of Archaeological and Anthropological Research of Chandigarh, and Dr Anne Dambricourt Malasse, palaeo-anthropologist, department of prehistory, National Museum of Natural History, Paris.

The two Leaders viewed the displays of archaeological findings from the foothills of the Himalayas which suggest human activity possibly dating back to 2.6 million years ago, making them among the oldest known remnants of human existence. This significant discovery is the result of seven years of extensive research and collaboration between the Prehistory Department of the National Museum of Natural History of France and the Society of Archaeological and Anthropological Research of Chandigarh undertaken under the auspices of an "Agreement of Collaboration between Society for Archaeological & Anthropological Research, India and French National Museum of Natural History".

The archaeological discovery comprises about 1500 fossil finds, including 200 quartzite tools collected from several locations spread over 50 acres of area in Masol region near Chandigarh. The research work relating to this archaeological discovery is being published in the form of articles in the *Palevol Review*.

"Visit to the Government museum – an example of Indo-French collaboration in historical & archaeological work," external affairs ministry spokesman Vikas Swarup tweeted.

The Prime Minister and President Hollande congratulated the Indo-French team for their joint research work leading to this discovery. They underlined that this example of successful bilateral collaboration illustrated the long-standing cultural ties and enduring collaboration between India and France in rediscovering, preserving and promoting our shared cultural heritage. They hoped that such discoveries would lend further momentum for more joint endeavours in the future.