

Bonjour India

Dear friends,

I am very happy to have you all here at the Residence of France. It's not often that we organise press conferences, but today I want to announce a big event that will take place next year. We are organising, together with our Indian partners, a great festival, "Bonjour India", from January to March 2013. Covering all areas of artistic creation, it will be a cultural firework that will add new lights and colours to our friendship.

Culture and arts are integral parts of the friendship between France and India. I have been in Delhi for only thirteen months, but since my arrival I have been struck by our considerable mutual interest and curiosity in each other. Our two countries have a deep respect for each other's cultures. The idea of Bonjour India will be to open new artistic fields and provide inspiration for the artists of our two countries.

The Bonjour India festival in 2009 was a great success and we had many reasons to do it again. But it will not be a mere repetition - we are doing even more and bringing new ideas. Once again, the festival Bonjour India 2013 will consist of original artistic productions of high quality. Cooperation between France and India will be at the core of the festival. These will not be events imposed upon the public with a "one size fits all" philosophy. On the contrary, we want it to be an exchange of ideas, cultural inspiration between French and Indian artists. We want to reach out to all groups in the Indian society, so all events will be free. The festival will be spread across India, with events in sixteen cities. This is a lasting endeavour that was initiated by my predecessor, Mr Jérôme Bonnafont, and I am happy and proud to be bringing it to you today.

The festival will last three months, and nearly every day, all over India, we will see events of all artistic aspects: dance, theatre, cinema, music, cuisine, fashion, photography, literature, heritage, architecture and urbanism, digital creations. This will be a very rich three-month festival and I am very pleased to add that, in May 2013, the Festival de Cannes will pay tribute to the 100th anniversary of Indian cinema.

Last and not the least, I would like to thank all our partners who are making invaluable contributions to the festival. Thank you, Ambassador Suresh Goel, Director General of ICCR, and let me tell you how pleased we are today to sign an agreement between our two countries with you for the organisation of the festival.

I would also like to thank the Indian Ministry of Culture, which has been working with us for the preparation of this big event. My sincerest thanks to the local authorities and the Alliances Françaises, which have made it possible to organise so many events across India. As many events will take place in Delhi, I have a special thought for the authorities of this magnificent city, and would like to express my gratitude to Mrs Sheila Dikshit, Hon'ble Chief Minister, and to Shri Tejendra Khanna, Hon'ble Lt. Governor of Delhi, for their immense help and support. Finally, my heartfelt thanks go out to all our partners and sponsors for all their contribution to the success of Bonjour India.

Once again, we have three very rich months ahead of us, during which we will explore new areas of cultural cooperation together. The festival promises to be – as I said - a cultural firework that will imbue the friendship between India and France with new hues and radiance.

François Richier, Ambassador of France to India