

New Delhi, 28 March 2022

Notes from Ambassador of France to India, H.E. Mr Emmanuel Lenain

- We are delighted to bring a new edition of *Bonjour India* to 19 cities across the country. With 120 events, it is **one of the most important cultural festivals ever organized by France abroad**. This is telling about the importance of India for France, and the quality of our partnership.
- This edition marks the 75th anniversary of the independence of India and the establishment of diplomatic relationships between France and India. We built this festival as **a present from France to the people of India**. The poster reflects this intention, in the form of a birthday card, in different Indian languages.
- You can see that we chose **an illustration of *The Little Prince*** as the main picture on this poster, for various reasons:
 - *The Little Prince* is a novella about friendship, and the festival reflects on the long-lasting friendship between the people of France and the people of India.
 - It is the book that usually first comes to mind in India when people think of French literature. It is the world's most translated book, excluding religious books. It was translated in more than 300 languages and dialects, including Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Gujarati, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Punjabi, Rajasthani, Tamil, Telugu, and even Sanskrit.
 - *The Little Prince*, despite turning 75 himself four years ago, is a character that still speaks very much to the youth. Young people find this book very modern and are particularly interested in its philosophy. It is proof that you can still be young at 75! In addition, it is our aim to talk to the youth of India. It is a priority of our strategic partnership, as reflected in our efforts to welcome more and more Indian students to France for university mobility programs.
- **Bonjour India is a collaborative work of the whole French cultural network in India**. It comprises French institutions like the French Embassy and the French Institute in India, as well as our fantastic network of 14 Alliances françaises (which are Indian organizations dedicated to the promotion of French language and culture) and our many cultural partners throughout the country, who are coproducing or hosting some of our events.
- **Bonjour India is a two-way program with India**, who organizes the *Namaste France* festival at the same time in France. I would like to thank the Government of India, in particular the Ministry of External Affairs and the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, for this continued collaboration in the cultural domain. We are honored to have Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture Meenakshi Lekhi attend the launch of Bonjour India tomorrow night.

- The government of France is the main funder of Bonjour India. Yet, **we are very grateful for the support of our sponsors**. This year, we are very happy to have on board BNP Paribas as the principal sponsor and I thank Mr. Aymar de Liedekerke Beaufort and his team for their commitment to arts and education.
- I would like to finish with a few words about the program. With around 120 events, it would be tedious to go through the whole list, however I would like to sum up its spirit around a few key words:
 - **Diverse:** We have put in place a program which includes theatre, music, dance, circus, literature, cinema, photography, science, architecture and even gastronomy.
 - **Festive:** The mood will be celebrative, marking the 75th anniversary of the independence of India. There will be street art with a parade of giant puppets with the show *A Twist of Fate*, there will be juggling and acrobats with the circus company *Analemma*, and there will be cinema under the stars with good French food and wine with *CafeCinema*.
 - **Open to all:** Most of our events are free and several take place in public spaces, such as the *Wall Art Festival*, the *Rick-Show* or the *Night of Ideas*.
 - **Inclusive:** the French cultural network in India has organized many events in the last 12 months about inclusivity and gender equality, and this is reflected in *Bonjour India's* program with for example *City for all*.
 - **Past and forward looking:** Although most of the program is about new partnerships, we also have two historical exhibitions, for the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relationships between France and India. *Convergences* is a retrospective of the way French photographers have pictured India since the invention of photography, while *Science beyond borders* tells the stories of the many scientific partnerships between our two countries.
 - **Collaborative:** our mission is to make French and Indian artists meet and create together. Many shows are the result of a joint work of artistes from the two countries, through residencies.
 - **Reciprocal:** we are delighted that *Bonjour India* will be followed by *Namaste France*. Moreover, India is the guest of honor of the Paris Book Fair in April and then France will be the guest of honor of the New Delhi World Book Fair.
 - **Top-notch:** Bonjour India is bringing to our audiences the best of France. For the *Convergences* exhibition, we are bringing original photographs from the most famous French museums (Quai Branly, Guimet Museum). These pictures had never traveled to India despite the fact that they were taken in India. In literature, we will invite India to chose its own *Goncourt Award*, the most prestigious French literary prize, created in 1903. Finally, we are very excited to host Blanca Li, one of the most prestigious French ballet company, going to Mumbai, Delhi and Hyderabad with their show *Elektrik*.