

Address of Hon'ble Lt. Governor Shri K. Kailashnathan at the Indo-French Festival 2025 org. by Tourism Dept., Puducherry

Venue: Gandhi Thidal, Beach Road, Puducherry.

Date: 14-02-2025

It gives me pride to inaugurate this grand celebration of Indo-French Festival 2025 with 'A Touch of France' organised by Puducherry Tourism Department. It is true that Puducherry with its blend of Indian and French heritage serves as the perfect backdrop for this vibrant festival that commemorates the deep-rooted ties between India and France.

This festival reminds the shared history, values and aspirations that have united both nations for centuries. The bond between India and France is not just one of diplomacy, but of Culture, Education, Trade, & Mutual Respect. This festival is a testament of the contributions of Indo-French community in fostering this relationship between the two great nations.

The historical connection of Puducherry with France dates back to the 17th century. The legacy of French rule continued for nearly three centuries from 1674 to 1954. Puducherry, once a French Colony till remains a living example of the confluence of two distinct yet harmonious cultures.

I would recollect that Puducherry has been ranked second among the top globally trending must-visit destinations for year 2025, after Toulouse in France, both cities have the connections of French Culture. Puducherry still have community of French people living in the City and French is also an Official language.

There are around 6,500 French people registered in South India, and of these about 5,000 are in Puducherry.

Walking through the streets of Puducherry, one is transported to an era where Indo-French architecture, cuisine and traditions flourished side by side. This Heritage is not merely a relic of the past; It continues to shape our present and inspire our future.

From the days of early trade exchanges to the establishment of cultural and educational institutions, the Indo-French bond has strengthened over time. The French Institute of Pondicherry, the Alliance française and other Cultural and Research institutions have played a pivotal role in preserving and promoting this shared legacy.

Culture is the soul of a nation and this festival is a celebration of the vibrant cultural exchange that exists between India and France. This festival provides a platform for artists, musicians and performers from both nations to come together, collaborate and create. The streets of Puducherry will come alive with a grand cultural parade and mesmerizing street performances adding to the festive spirit. It is through such cultural exchanges that we nurture mutual understanding and appreciation, transcending borders and uniting people through shared artistic expressions.

Education is another vital pillar of the Indo- French relationship. France has been a favoured destination for Indian students pursuing higher studies in fields such as Engineering, Management, Humanities and the Arts.

Institutions such as Ecole Francaise d' Extreme-Orient and the French Institute of Pondicherry continue to contribute to research in Indology, History and Environmental Sciences. Such academic collaborations not only enhance knowledge sharing but also strengthen people-to-people connections fostering a sense of global citizenship.

Beyond Culture and Education the Indo-French partnership extends to the realms of Economy, Trade and Technology. Puducherry with its strategic location and skilled workforce has the potential to become a hub for Indo-French business ventures.

As we celebrate our shared heritage today, let us also look towards the future. Our partnership is not confined to the past. It is an evolving relationship that continues to grow stronger with each passing year. It is our responsibility to nurture this bond, ensuring that the Indo-French connection remains vibrant and dynamic.

I urge the younger generation to take an active role in this endeavour. Let us encourage more Educational exchanges, Cultural collaborations and Technology innovations that bring our nations closer. Let us continue to learn from each other, embrace our differences and celebrate our similarities.

As we embark on this three-day journey of cultural celebration, I invite each and every one of you to immerse yourselves in the magic of 'A Touch of France'. I take this opportunity to acknowledge the crucial role of Govt. of Puducherry in making this festival a success.

In conclusion, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all those who have made this festival a grand success. The efforts and enthusiasm of organisers, participants, artists and visitors have made this event a truly memorable one. May this festival serve as a beacon of Indo-French friendship, inspiring the generations to come.

Vive l'amitié Indo-Française (Long live Indo-French friendship)

Thank you.