

**Embassy of India
Jakarta
Press Release**

Launch of “Sahabat India”: Festival of India in Indonesia 2015

In a glittering press conference on 14 January, 2015 at Hotel JW Marriot, H.E. Gurjit Singh, Ambassador of India to Indonesia and Timor Leste launched the Festival of India in Indonesia with the slogan “Sahabat India” meaning ‘trustful, loyal, true friend’ and released the logo, video and music of the Festival of India. This festival will run from January to May 2015 and bring the vibrancy and vigour of India’s social, economic and cultural engagement with the friendly country of Indonesia to a new level.

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Singh said, “India and Indonesia are civilizational friends who were brought together not merely by geography but commonality of cultural heritage and harmonious linkages over centuries. India and Indonesia are among the youngest countries in the world. Our youthful population, our pluralistic societies, our chosen democratic paths of development, all provide us similarities and commonalities which will hold us in good stead as we traverse the 21st century together. “Sahabat India” is a humble tribute to our steadfast partnership.”

Ambassador Gurjit Singh noted that the Government of India in recent months has taken several initiatives like International Yoga Day, Clean India Campaign, Digital India, Make in India and the like. The Festival of India will bring these experiences for sharing with Indonesia where similar experiences are also emerging.

In his address Ambassador thanked the support extended for the Festival of India by Ministries of External Affairs, Culture, Tourism & Textiles of the Government of India and the Indian Council of Cultural Relations to organize these events. He also lauded and appreciated the support of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Tourism, Culture and Education of the Government of Republic of Indonesia and the Government of the City of Jakarta and the various provincial Governments, Universities, Institutions that have also pledged support to these events.

The Guest of Honour, H.E. Ms. Esti Andayani, Director General for Information and Public Diplomacy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the

Republic of Indonesia congratulated the Government of India and Embassy for bringing the Festival of India to Indonesia. She expressed hope that the Festival of India will strengthen the friendly relations between the two countries and strengthen people to people contact. She said that the plan to take the Festival of India to 15 different cities of Indonesia, will enhance appreciation for India in Indonesia. Ms. Esti remarked that both India and Indonesia share common culture and work for peace, stability and hope for all. She fondly recalled her association with India as Consul General of India in Mumbai 27 years ago and shared her experience on great variety of Indian cuisine & travel destinations.

The press conference was also attended by several prominent Indonesian celebrities including Ms. Shinta Kamdani, CEO of Sintesa Group and expert in the Economic implementation team in the Vice President's Office; Ms. Farah Quinn, a famous TV personality and celebrity Chef; Mr. Didiet Maulana, famous young designer and entrepreneur known for his brand IKAT Indonesia; Mr. Ringgo Agus Rahman, celebrity actor; Ms. Laksmi Pamuntjak, a well-known writer; and Ms. Asma Nadia a travel writer. They spoke about their fondness for India, Bollywood films, Indian authors and academicians, scientific achievements in IT sector, culture and food and extended their support to the Festival of India.

Ms. Shinta Kamdani said that people to people contact precedes trade and business between the two countries. The Festival of India will strengthen the relations between the people, which will lead to more tourism, trade and investment.

Ms. Farah Quinn said that India is the oldest and most influential culture in the world. She said that shades of Indian culture are visible all over Indonesia. Being a fan of Bollywood movies, she said, she would like more Indian movies to be screened in Indonesia and at the same time more Indonesian movies should be screened in India. She expressed her desire to visit India.

Mr. Didiet Maulana recalled his participation in the "100 years of Bollywood" organized by the Embassy in 2013, in which he designed dresses from Indian fabrics. He said he is inspired by the lavishness of Bollywood. He said that Festival of India will help strengthen friendship between India and Indonesia.

Mr. Ringgo Agus Rahman, being an actor, spoke about Bollywood actors and movies. He appreciated the latest Indian movie 'PK' which is being screened in Indonesia and wished success for the Festival of India.

Ms. Laksmi Pamuntjak said that she has studied about similarities between the culture of India and Indonesia in her school but as a writer she better perceives it. She said that new artists in Indonesia are displaying complex situations in their art forms which is very similar to trend in India.

Ms. Asma Nadia said she wishes to one day write "Assalamualaikum New Delhi" or "Assalamualaikum Agra". She said that not only Hinduism and Buddhism but Islam also came to Indonesia through the shores of India. As such India is not only a friend but a family member. She said that as a writer she is impressed by the script of Indian movie "PK" and regards it outstanding. She appreciated the human resources in India and said many of India's writers, academicians, managers and businessmen are highly regarded in international community.

H.E. Mr. Gurjit Singh, Ambassador, Guest of Honour, H.E. Ms. Esti Andayani, Director General for Information and Public Diplomacy and other distinguished guests and celebrities released the "Festival of India" booklet which contains details of the program being organized during the Festival of India which is beginning from January 26, 2015.

During the Festival of India, folk dances, dance drama, puppet show, musical shows, exhibitions, seminars, mall promotions, screening of Bollywood cinema, documentaries and the like will be held in several prestigious locations in Jakarta. Besides, we are also looking to take segments of the festival to fifteen other cities in Indonesia, including Bali, Yogyakarta, Bandung, Surabaya, Surakarta, Semarang, Bogor, Serang, Purwakarta, Makassar, Medan, Padang, Banda Aceh, Samarinda, Balikpapan and Palembang. This will help the people of Indonesia in different cities to have a glimpse of India, which would foster greater understanding.

India looks forward to successful enhancement of our engagement with Indonesia and invite all our Indonesian friends to join us in this celebration of India's long-standing and steadfast friendship with Indonesia.

Jakarta
15.1.2015