



## Ministry of External Affairs

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# Remarks of the President at the inauguration of 'Namaste Russia' - Festival of Indian Culture in Russia (May 10, 2015)

May 10, 2015

Mr. Vladimir Medinsky, Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation;

Director of the Tchaikovsky Concert Hall;

Dear Russian friends of India;

Members of the Indian community in Russia;

**Ladies and Gentlemen:**

Zdrastvui Russia! Namaste Russia!

It is with great pleasure that we launch today 'Namaste Russia' – a festival of Indian culture in Russia.

Indian culture and its heritage of art, music and cinema have enjoyed love and appreciation across this great country over centuries. We treasure this affection and interest towards India.

In India too, there is enormous warmth and regard for Russian culture as showcased in its ballet, literature and traditions. Russia's Gerasim Lebedev, who was arguably the first European Indologist, pioneered the Bengali theatre 220 years ago in Kolkata.

It is cultural bonds that build solid bridges of friendship and understanding between peoples and countries. We celebrate these affinities and strengthen them through regular cultural festivals in our countries.

With the support of the Russian Ministry of Culture, 'Namaste Russia' will reach various regions of this vast country over the next six months. In response to the interest in Indian fine arts across Russia, the Indian Council for Cultural Relations will send Indian teachers of music and dance to regional centres in Russia. I am sure that these and other efforts will help people living in different regions of Russia to deepen their engagement with contemporary and classical Indian culture.

It is also important that the youth of our two countries is encouraged to join these cultural exchanges. I am, therefore, delighted to learn that the logo for 'Namaste Russia' is designed by a young Russian from the Russian town of Krasnoyarsk, who succeeded in an open competition with both Indians and Russians.

I take this opportunity to also felicitate the Kadamb dance company and its eminent director,

Kumudini Lakhia, for gracing this inaugural event of 'Namaste Russia' with an art form which has thousands of passionate followers in Russia.

In my many decades of public life, I have been closely associated with Russia and have experienced the warm friendship of its people. I am convinced that an important pillar of the special and privileged strategic partnership between our two countries is the friendship and understanding between our peoples. With its thematic diversity and its geographic spread in this country, I am confident that 'Namaste Russia' will contribute to sustaining and enhancing this mutual empathy.

Thank you.



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