

**Embassy of India
Yerevan**

**Speech at Inauguration of Festival of Indian Films (Yash Raj Films)
[Moscow Cinema, Yerevan, 14 November 2024]**

- H.E. Mr. Artur Martirosyan, Deputy Minister of Education, Science, Culture and Sports of RA,
- H.E. Mr. Mnatsakan Safaryan, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of RA,
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
- Mr. Davit Banuchyan, Director, Cinema Fund of Armenia,
- Mr. David Bejitashvili, Head of NPLE Chamber of Cultural and Scientific Relationships of Georgia and India

Excellencies, Ladies & Gentlemen, Dear Friends,

Namaskar! Bari yereko! Good evening!

I am delighted to warmly welcome you all this evening for a celebration of Indian Films in Yerevan. Indian cinema is an integral part of our country's cultural landscape and a significant player on the global stage. Indian cinema encompasses a variety of regional film industries, contributing to the diverse and vibrant spectrum of Indian film making. With its rich storytelling traditions and the rise of independent film making voices, Indian cinema resonates with audiences worldwide, fostering cross-cultural understanding and empathy across borders. It continues to shape perceptions, ignite imaginations and bridge cultural divides, exemplifying the enduring soft power of its cinematic legacy.

The Hindi Film Industry, often popularly called 'Bollywood', needs no introduction especially here in Armenia where Raj Kapoor and Mithun Chakraborty alias 'Jimmy' continue to evoke warmth, nostalgia

and a cultural connect with India. The Indian film industry has earned a global reputation as one of the largest cinema hubs of the world rolling out more than 1500 films yearly including films in regional languages. Films in Hindi, however, remain the largest segment.

Indian films, especially from Bollywood, have now truly become global. However, the journey from local to global has been gradual. The roots of Indian cinema can be traced back to the 'silent era' when Dadasaheb Phalke's film '*Raja Harishchandra*' marked the beginning of the Indian film industry in 1913. The golden era of Indian cinema during the 1950s and 1960s saw the emergence of iconic filmmakers like Satyajit Ray, Guru Dutt and Raj Kapoor whose films gained international recognition and acclaim. However, it was in 1990s that Indian cinema truly began its journey towards globalization. Economic liberalization coupled with technological advancements in technology and communication facilitated the globalization of Bollywood. Several factors contributed to its globalization - the Indian diaspora, spread across the world, has played a pivotal role in popularizing Indian films globally. The diaspora's nostalgia for Indian culture and traditions, fuelled the demand for Bollywood films leading to the establishment of a robust overseas market. Also, Indian cinema's unique blend of music, dance, drama and emotions has a universal appeal. The Government of India, through the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, aims to promote India as a global centre for film production due to its abundant resources for live film production and shooting including diverse locations, services and skilled talent as well as a robust animation and visual effects industry to meet the post production needs. From its humble origins to becoming a global cultural force, Indian cinema has evolved into a vibrant and influential industry and an important tool of cultural diplomacy. We hope to make this event, that is the festival of Indian films, a regular event in Armenia. We believe this will give a fillip to our bilateral relations in the field of film production, cinema, television, Indian music and dance.

Before we begin today's programme, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting of India for helping us organize this film festival for promotion of Indian

films. I thank the Armenian Ministry of Education, Culture, Science & Sports for their cooperation. I would also like to thank Mr. David Bejitashvili who is a film producer in Georgia. He is a Bollywood buff and has been promoting Indian cinema in Georgia and Armenia tirelessly for over three decades. I would also like to warmly thank our cultural performers this evening – Sitarist Mr. Peter Davidian, Oud player Mr. Tigran Kazazian who would be accompanied on the Tabla by Mr. Orestis Moustidis. It goes without saying that I thank all my colleagues at the Indian Embassy for their exemplary team work.

I sincerely hope that you enjoy these Yash Raj Films – a very famous Bollywood production and distribution house churning out memorable and popular movies for decades. Founded by Yash Raj Chopra in 1970, it is known for making big-budget blockbusters and working with the biggest actors of the industry, launching young talent, a pioneer in new formats of film distribution and exploring new territories. Starting with the blockbuster and all-time favourite “Chak De! India” this evening, we have lined up six Yash Raj Films with daily 2 shows over the next three days.

Thank you and I hope you enjoy immensely watching these movies just as much as we have enjoyed bringing them to you!
