



Communique de Presse

Press release

INDIA – COUNTRY OF HONOUR AT THE BASTILLE DAY, JULY 14, 2009

India will be the Country of honour at the ceremony of the French Republic Day on July 14th. The march-past will be opened by Indian contingent comprising of 400 soldiers from all forces – Army, Navy and the Air force. The Prime Minister of India Mr MANMOHAN SINGH and his spouse Mrs. Gursharan Khaur will be present at parade as the Guest of Honour.

Indian contingents at the Bastille Day parade

Indian Army Contingent



Maratha Light Infantry is one of the oldest and famous Regiments of the Indian Army and its history spans over 235 years. The first Battalion of the Regiment was raised in 1768. The Marathas come from Deccan and the Konkan regions, located in the South Western part of India. Today the Regiment has 18 battalions. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the units of the Regiment fought in a number of campaigns across the world including China, Burma, Africa and Abyssinia.

During World War I, the Regiment covered itself with glory in campaigns in Persia, Palestine, Afghanistan and Mesopotamia. During the Second World War the Maratha Light Infantry participated in operations in Europe, South East Asia and North Africa and has won many battle honours including Keren, Tobrak and Monte Cassino. Since 1947, the Regiment has taken part in all operations fought by the Indian Army – the five wars, counter insurgency operations and on the Siachin Glacier.

Today, the Regiment has thirteen Theatre Honours, 61 Battle Honours and over 135 gallantry awards including 02 Victoria Cross and 04 Ashoka Chakra which is the highest peace time gallantry awards in India. The contingent is led by Captain Vivek Khanduri and comprises 93 personnel.

Indian Navy Contingent

The Indian Navy is a well balanced and cohesive three dimensional force, capable of operating above, on and under the surface of the oceans effectively safeguarding the national interests. The cutting edge of the Indian Navy are its two fleets, namely the Western Fleet based at Mumbai and the Eastern Fleet based at Visakhapatnam. The contingent is led by Commander Rajiv Sharma and comprises 93 personnel.



Indian Air Force Contingent

With strength of approximately 170,000 personnel, 1,130 combat and 1,700 non-combat aircraft in active service, the Indian Air Force is the fourth largest air force in the world. In recent years, the IAF has undertaken an ambitious expansion and modernization program and is increasingly used for India's power projection beyond South Asia. The contingent is led by Squadron Leader Alok Sharma and comprises of 93 personnel.

Indian Army Military Band

The Indian Army Military Band, which will march with the Indian Army contingent during the National Day Parade of France on 14 July 2009, was raised in 1990 in New Delhi. It has bandsmen from all the military bands of the Army to retain the true representation of the entire nation in one band. The Military Band consists of a Band Master and 30 musicians. Great care is taken in selection of instruments for a band keeping in mind the quality and make. They, however, consist of three basic types of instruments: woodwind, brass and percussion instruments.

The Indian Army Band has the unique privilege of performing during visits of various foreign dignitaries to India, at the Rashtrapati Bhawan and during national functions like Republic Day, Independence Day and Beating Retreat Ceremonies. The Indian Army Military Band has been on good will visits to several foreign nations and enthralled the audience with their performance. In the recent past, the band has played in France, Italy, Sweden, Japan, Malaysia, Chile, Germany and the UK. The Indian Army has 48 Military Bands and more than 400 Pipes & Drums Bands. All these Bands are trained at the fount of Military Music of India; the Military Music Wing in the AEC Training Centre and College at Pachmarhi in Madhya Pradesh.

The Indian Naval Band

The origin of the Indian Navy Band goes back to 1945 when it was formed with a handful of Navy musicians. It has come a long way since then and today the Indian Navy has many trained musicians in its ranks. The Indian Naval Band has regaled audiences across the country and around the globe- during goodwill cruises of Naval ships to many foreign shores and also whilst playing in ensemble with bands of the armed forces of UK, USA and Germany.

Of special distinction for the Navy Band have been the international performances during the Queen's Coronation in the UK, Expo-70 in Japan and bicentenary celebrations of the Statue of Liberty and the President's Fleet Review in the USA, the Australian Bicentennial celebration and the International Music Festival in France. Versatility is the hallmark of the Indian Naval Band. Its wide ranging repertoire includes stirring martial music, arrangements of symphonies, overtures, concertos, Indian classical and other forms of contemporary pop and folk music.

The Naval Band continues to relate closely to the audience, making every effort to incorporate different forms and texture of music, giving it a rich coloratura and carrying the message of 'Unity in Diversity'

Embassy of India
PARIS
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