Pondicherry Heritage Festival to be held for a longer duration this year

The festival celebrating the culture, tradition, history, arts and architecture of Puducherry is back. This year, the Pondicherry Heritage Festival will be held for a longer period — from February 5 to 26.

The third edition of the heritage festival will be a star-studded event with film actors Nasser and Kushboo participating.

The main focus of this festival will be on Bahour, one of the most ancient locations in Puducherry, dating back to the Chola period.

Addressing the media on Tuesday, Alliance Francaise in Puducherry Director Oliver Litvine stressed that the preservation of heritage was a tremendously important aspect of any dynamic society.
If you do not know where you come from, you will not know where you are going to. India has a tremendously rich heritage that encompasses works of arts and also traces left by various colonisers. It is very important to preserve this heritage irrespective of whether it is tangible or intangible,” he said.

Sunaina Mandeen of PondyCAN, one of the organisers, noted that this was the third edition of the festival. Organised by Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) Puducherry, People for Pondicherry’s Heritage, PondyCAN, the Pondicherry Heritage Festival is supported by the Departments of Art and Culture and Tourism.

The festival partners include Alliance Francaise in Puducherry, French Institute of Pondicherry (IFP), Centre for Ecology and Rural Development (CERD-Puducherry) and many others.

Ms. Mandeen said: “Puducherrians are going to celebrate our beautiful heritage. This includes the nature, tradition, culture, buildings and the products made in Puducherry.”

She added that famed dancers like Anita Ratnam would perform and the Hoteliers Association was organising a ‘kids on skates’ programme.

Arul of INTACH said that the festival was originally conceived as a way of drawing attention to the need to conserve Puducherry’s outstanding architectural legacy. Its scope had now expanded to embrace all manner of intangible traditions and also focussed on giving the younger generation an exposure to the rich heritage. Hence, the festival on Sunday would be inaugurated at Bahour. “Drawing competitions for children on this subject and a discussion on built heritage will be held,” he added.

Raghu Menon of CERD– Puducherry added that civilisation in Puducherry began in Bahour. The Mulanathaswami Temple in Bahour was built even before the Thanajvur temples were built by the Cholas.

“Many in Puducherry are not aware of this history,” he added.

The festival will have interactive sessions and roundtable discussions with experts on heritage.

Audrey Richard-Ferroudji of IFP said that experts from different disciplines would discuss the need to conserve the natural heritage of Puducherry.

Alliance Francaise of Puducherry is organising a talk on the history of magic in India and France by French magician Lawrens Godon.

Vijay Shankar, festival coordinator, The Pondicherry Heritage Festival, Ashok of INTACH, S. Varalakshmi, one of the festival organisers, Ruth Sequeira of HiDesign and Bitasta Samantaray of People for Pondicherry’s Heritage were present at the press meet.