

Je t'aime, Mumbai

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Jean-Marc Séré-Charlet, Atul Kumar and Sameep Padora. Séré-Charlet was the chief guest at the recently concluded exhibition, *Architects and Firms that built Modern Bombay*, where he spoke highly of Mumbai's Art Deco ensemble (right) Khotachiwadi. PIC COURTESY/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Since March 20 is observed as International Francophonie Day, celebrating the French language globally, this diarist reached out to Mumbai-resident and Consul General of France to India, Jean-Marc Séré-Charlet to get the lowdown on the city's French connections. "Mumbai and Paris are very similar. They are both international cities. In fact, French and Indian languages often use the formal and informal pronouns depending on the situation," he shared. He even tipped a hat to Mumbaiiyya slang by saying, "We do have some words that are used colloquially like Baraque/kholi for a small house, or Mec/chhava for a guy." A keen observer of Mumbai's urban heritage, he was recently present at the Art Deco exhibition in Asiatic Society of Mumbai. Naturally, the city's Art Deco landmarks are some of his favourite spots. He shared, "I admire the Art Déco neighbourhoods. The movement that started that spread across erstwhile Bombay in the 1930s, is said to be inspired by the International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts that took place in Paris in 1925." While he loves Regal and Liberty cinemas, and walking through Khotachiwadi, he added, "I love all references to history, and places that have a character."

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