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Apeejay lit fest to be bigger and better

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Kolkata: The city is yet to soak in the festive spirit on the eve of Christmas and new year, but the countdown for the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF), which is being organized in association with The Times of India, has already begun. So if it's all about good food and late-night parties over the next couple of weeks, book launches and literary dialogues won't allow the festive mood to subside at least till mid-January.



In its fifth edition, AKLF promises to be bigger and better. The six-day festival, which begins on January 8, has an engaging line-up of events. While literature will be the mainstay, other art forms will also be highlighted in this unique show of intellectual discourse.

The AKLF has always celebrated a personality through its festival and



Subhijyoti Kamila

Festival directors Maina Bhagat (left) and Anjum Katyal during the announcement of the programme schedule at Oxford Bookstores on Tuesday

this year's event will revolve around Maulana Abul Kalam Azad. The year being the 125th birth anniversary of Azad, the festival will kick off at the Victoria Memorial with Aamir Khan, a descendant of Azad's family, delivering the key note address on the vision and secular ideals of the freedom fighter. The Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (Makis) is partnering with the Apeejay Surrendra Group for holding all Azad-related programmes.

Another highlight of the festival

will be sarod maestro Amjad Ali Khan's book on his father, Hafiz Ali Khan, on the second day of the festival.

Indian English writing in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh along with literary movements in the European world will be showcased in the festival. "We are trying to create an identity for South Asian writers since that is emerging as the new zone where rich and vibrant literary dialogues have started, both in English and in regional languages," said Maina Bhagat, one of the directors of the festival.

Women and the space they need for meaningful creation will also be highlighted through specially designed programmes, one of which is called 'Forbidden Pleasures? Intimacy and Women's Lives'. This programme, scheduled on January 9, will see literary personalities like Shereen el Feki, Syeda Hameed, Mrinal Pande, Anita Nair and Ruchir Joshi in a panel discussion that will be moderated by Urvasi Butalia. The lives of Inayat Nour and Gauhar Jaan, one a spy and the other Asia's first vocalist to be recorded, will be revealed in a discussion that will be moderated by historian Hari Vasudevan on January 11. Even wildlife conservation will feature prominently in the festival.

Apart from Victoria Memorial, other heritage buildings that will host the event include Town Hall, St John's Church and Tollygunge Club. "We try to generate interest in heritage through the festival and hence choose such venues. This year, we have tied up with Intach for this," said Anjum Katyal, another director of the festival.

In order to give an international flavour to the programme, AKLF has tied up with the British Council, Alliance Francaise, Goethe Institut, Pro Helvetia Swiss Arts Council and the Danish Arts Council.