Press Release

Padma Shri Parassala Ponnamal, Padma Bhushan T V Gopalakrishnan to receive the first “Nishagandhi Sangeetha Puraskaram”

- Five-day “Nishagandhi Monsoon Ragas” Music Fest to begin on July 20

Thiruvananthapuram, July 17: Eminent classical musicians Padma Shri Parassala B Ponnammal and Padma Bhushan Dr. T V. Gopalakrishnan have been selected for the inaugural Nishagandhi Sangeetha Puraskaram, instituted by Kerala Tourism to honour artists who have made outstanding contributions to music.

Shri Kadakampally Surendran, Minister for Tourism, Cooperation and Devaswom made the announcement at a press conference here on Wednesday. The honour carries Rs 1.5 lakh, citation and memento.

Nishagandhi Monsoon Ragas, the five-day music festival organized by the Kerala Tourism Department, will be inaugurated by Hon'ble Governor of Kerala Rtd Justice Shri P. Sathasivam on July 20, at 6.15 PM at Kanakakunnu Palace.

Minister for Tourism, Co-operation and Devaswom Shri Kadakampally Surendran will preside over the function. The inaugural session of the festival will be attended by Dr Shashi Tharoor MP, Shri V.K Prasanth, Mayor Thiruvananthapuram, Smt Rani George IAS, Tourism Secretary, Shri P. Bala Kiran IAS, Tourism Director, Shri Palayam Rajan, Councillor, Thiruvananthapuram Corporation and Shri V.K Madhu; President District Panchayat.

Recipient of Padma Shri Parassala B. Ponnammal, 95, has an eventful musical career, starting as a budding singer with All India Radio in 1940. She also has the distinction of being the first female student of Swathi Thirunal Music Academy here. She also stood out as the first woman singer to perform during the Navarathri Music Festival of the famed Sree Padmanabhaswamy Temple.

Besides being a leading Carnatic vocalist, Ponnammal has also left a deep impression as a music scholar and teacher associated with leading institutions. Her academic career started as a teacher at the Government Cotton Hill High School and later became the first female member of the faculty at the Swati Tirunal Music College. She later served as the Principal of RLV Fine Arts College, Thrippunithara. An ardent classicist, the honours received by Ponnammal include Guruvayurappan Chembai Puraskaram, Sangeetha Nataka Akademy award and Swathi Sangeetha Puraskaram.

Padma Bhushan Dr T V Gopalakrishnan, 87, has an illustrious musical career spanning over several decades. A versatile artist, he excelled both as a vocalist, mridangam player and violinist, and accompanied leading singers at a young age. He is equally proficient in the Hindustani tradition and is a revered authority on various musical streams.
Popularly known as TVG, Thrippunithura Viswanathan Gopalakrishnan started taking lessons in music at the age of four and had the rare fortune of being part of a concert by Carnatic legend Chembai Vaidyanatha Bhagavathar as a nine-year-old.

He has conducted hundreds of concerts in the country and abroad since 1949, and boasts of large fan following and disciples, cutting across boundaries.

The honour will be presented to the top-notch classical musicians by Chief Minister of Kerala Shri Pinarayi Vijayan at the valedictory ceremony of Nishagandhi Mansoon Ragas Music Festival on July 24, at 6 pm at Kanakakunnu Palace.

The selection was made by a committee consisting of the following eminent personalities: Sri Sreekumaran Thampi (Poet & Lyricist), Sri K Jayakumar (Retd. Chief Secretary & Lyricist), Sri Mathew Itty (Music Director), Sri S Saundara Rajan (Professor, Sri Swati Thirunal Govt. College of Music, Thiruvananthapuram), Smt. Rani George (Secretary-Tourism) and Sri P Bala Kiran (Director-Tourism).

The five-day music festival will bring a rare treat of classical and ethnic musical traditions of the sub-continent, featuring both vocalists and instrumentalists of various streams. The festival will commence with Bamboo Symphony by Unnikrishna Pakkanar followed by a concert by Chitravina N Ravikiran. The venue will reverberate in the following days with performances of leading singers like Ghazal Maestro Jaswinder Singh.

The artists to feature at the festival are violinist Krishna Ajith and the Carnatic Vocalist Vidushi S. Sowmya on July 22nd; Carnatic Vocalist Anantha Sai A.S and Grammy Award Winner Pandit Vishwa Mohan Bhatt (Mohana veena) and Samrat Pandit Salil Bhatt (Satwik Veena) in a duet on July 23rd. Contemporary Flute Fusion by Rajesh Cherthala and a Classical Fusion Band performance by “Shiva-The Musical Thunder”, lead by Usthad Rafiq Khan (Sitar) on July 24th will mark the end of this year’s Nishagandhi Monsoon Ragas Music Festival.

The Tourism Minister also added “along with the Monsoon Ragas, Champions Boat League (CBL) organised by the Tourism Department from August 10th to November 1st is expected to boost footfall of foreign tourists this year.”

Tourism Secretary Smt Rani George and Tourism Director Shri P Bala Kiran were also present at the press conference.

Apart from promoting art and culture by organizing events like Nishagandhi music festival, Kerala Tourism has also made bold initiatives in women empowerment through its Responsible Tourism Mission, earning international attention and recognition. An ethnic restaurant at Kumarakom launched as a women empowerment initiative under the RT Mission fetched the Gold Award of Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA) for 2019. Kerala Tourism’s website and marketing campaign also received PATA Gold awards.

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