



Department of Tourism

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Press Release

Music maestro Ilayaraja gets Nishagandhi Puraskaram

- *Tourism Minister unveils Nishagandhi brochure for 2016*
- *Fest to kick-start with sitar concert by Anoushka Shankar*

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 31: Iconic composer Ilayaraja is the recipient of this year's Nishagandhi Puraskaram, the Government of Kerala announced today.

The 72-year-old maestro is being conferred the honour for his artistic excellence and contribution to the Indian film music industry, state Tourism Minister Shri AP Anil Kumar told a press conference here.

A recipient of the Padma Bhushan, Tamil Nadu-born Ilayaraja is hailed for raising the bar of mainstream music by his eminent fusing of Indian folk music with various elements of Western classical to create a new genre that is hugely popular across regions and generations.

Chief Minister Shri Oommen Chandy will inaugurate the annual dance and music festival which will be held from January 20 to Jan 27 at Kanakakkunnu Palace here, Shri Anil Kumar said. He will also present the Nishagandhi Puraskaram to Shri Ilayaraja. At the press conference, the minister released the Nishagandhi brochure for 2016. He also inaugurated the 30-sec promotional video of the fest.

The award, selected by jury members including Vice-Chancellor of the Malayalam University and the former Chief Secretary Shri K Jayakumar; senior Journalist Shri Gouridasan Nair, Kerala Tourism Secretary Shri G Kamala Vardhana Rao and Tourism Director Shri Sheikh Pareeth will consist of a purse of Rs 150,000, citation and a statuette.

This year's Nishagandhi festival will kick off with classical sitar concert by Anoushka Shankar, who is daughter of legendary instrumentalist Pandit Ravi Shankar. This will be followed by performances of internationally-acclaimed artists including tabla exponent Zakir Hussain, actress-dancer Hema Malini, Marami Medhi (Kathak) and her actress daughter Meghranjini, Ileana Citarisi (Odissi), and TV Sankaranarayanan (Carnatic vocal).

Tourism Director Shri PI Sheik Pareeth said the department is coming up with a package that includes trade, tour operators and airlines for the benefit of international audience who wish to be a part of the fest. "Jet Airways, Etihad, Indigo, Silk Air and Oman Airways have come forward for this," he added.

The second day of the fest will have a Jugalbandhi performance by playback singer Gayathri Asokan and Carnatic singer Sreeranjini Kodampally. There will also be Kuchipudi dance by Vyjayanthi Kashi and her daughter Pratheeksha on the same evening.

The third day will feature a Bharathanatyam performance by Smitha Madhav and Carnatic Vocal by TV Sankaranarayanan.

On the fourth day, there will be a Mohiniyattam performance by up-and-coming Parvathy Sreevallabhan and Santra Pisharadi, a member of Natana Kaisiki troupe. Also, there will be instrumental fusion by Dr M Lalitha and M Nandini, popularly called Violin LN sisters.



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On the fifth day, there will be Kuchipudi performance by Arathy Sudhakaran, before a Sattriya dance by Ramkrishna Taludkar and his disciple Krishnakshi Kashyap. The evening will also see Kathak by Marami Medhi and her daughter Meghranjini.

On the sixth day, Pandit Sugato Bhaduri will perform on the mandolin, followed by Odissi by Padma Shri Ileana Citarisi who is Italy-born.

One of the greatest celebrities of Indian silver screen and an exponent of Bharatanatyam and Kuchipudi, Hema Malini will perform with her group on the seventh day.

The fest will conclude on the eighth day - January 27 with the Jugalbandhi by Ustad Zakir Husain, flautists Shashank Subramanyam (Carnatic) and Rakesh Chaurasia (Hindustani) along with young vocalist Arjun B Krishna.

Alongside, there will be a Kathakali festival from January 20 to 26, where Kathakali master Padmasree Kalamandalam Gopi will be performing on 26. There will also be a food fest organized by the Kerala Tourism Development Corporation.

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