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Press Release

Kathak maestro Pandit Rajendra Gangani to receive Kerala's Nishagandhi Puraskaram

- **Nishagandhi Dance Festival begins in city on Feb 14**

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb. 10: Leading Kathak exponent Pandit Rajendra Gangani has been selected for this year's prestigious Nishagandhi Puraskaram, instituted by the Department of Tourism, Government of Kerala, for outstanding contributions to Indian Classical Dance.

The coveted honour will be presented to Pandit Gangani at the inaugural of the week-long Nishagandhi Dance Festival in the city on February 14.

The award acknowledges Pandit Gangani's extraordinary contributions to Kathak, particularly his dedication to preserving and innovating the Jaipur Gharana tradition.

"The Nishagandhi Puraskaram is a fitting tribute to Pandit Rajendra Gangani's lifelong commitment to the art form, recognizing both his artistic brilliance and his role as a cultural ambassador of Indian classical dance", Tourism Minister Shri P A Mohamed Riyas said.

With a career that spans decades, Pandit Gangani has mesmerised audiences worldwide and nurtured the next generation of dancers.

Nishagandhi Dance Festival, organised by Kerala Tourism, will open at the sprawling Kanakakunnu Palace grounds here on Friday (14 February), featuring artistes from different parts of India representing diverse classical traditions.

The festival has lined up some of India's best classical dancers and upcoming stars to mesmerise the audience converging at the venue.

The event also showcases recent trends in Indian classical dance forms and sets a stage for upcoming artists to present their talents and artistic expressions.

"One of India's top-notch cultural events that has gained global attention, Nishagandhi Dance Festival brings together the top performers of classical dance forms of India," Tourism Minister Shri P A Mohamed Riyas said.

The festival offers a rare opportunity to dance enthusiasts and tourists to watch the live performances of pioneers and upcoming artists of our dance forms, kept alive over centuries.



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The event also is a key component of Kerala Tourism's efforts to promote cultural tourism, Shri Riyas added.

The public entry is free to the festival.

The inaugural ceremony at 6 pm will be followed by Bharatanatyam performance choreographed by Parshwananth S. Upadhye & Adithya P.V of Punyah Dance Company.

Pandit Rajendra Gangani & Group will enthral the audience with a Kathak performance at 8.30 pm on the opening day.

On Saturday (Feb 15), Odissi dancers Bidya Das & Lucky Prajna Pratisthita Mohanty will grace the evening with their opening act followed by Amrita Lahiri's mesmerising Kuchipudi moves. Dr Methil Devika and her group will perform Mohiniyattam as the final act of the day.

Sunday (Feb 16) evening of the fest will start with Sandra Pisharody's Mohiniyattam at 6:15 pm followed by Vidhya Subramanian's Bharatanatyam performance at 6:45 pm. Vyjayanthi Kashi and Prateeksha Kashi's Kuchipudi will be the final act of the night starting at 8 pm.

On February 17, Monday, Lekshmi Reghunath's Kuchupudi will be the opening act at 6.15 pm followed by Dr Janaki Rangarajan's Bharatanatyam at 6.45 pm. Kathak dance duo Hari and Chethana's performance will be the last performance of the day.

February 18, Tuesday, features Amritha Jayakrishnan's Bharatanatyam followed by Anita Sharma's Sattriya performance at 6:45 pm. Kuchipudi performance of Sreelakshmi Govardhanan and group will be the final event of the day at 8pm.

Aishwarya Meenakshi's Kuchipudi at 6:15 pm, Sujata Mohapatra's Odissi at 6 45 pm and Meera Das and Group's Odissi performance at 8, Sunitha Vimal's Bharatanatyam at 9 pm are the events on February 19 (Wednesday).

On the concluding day, 20 February, Thursday, Arjun Subramanian will perform Bharatanatyam at 6.15pm. Dr Neena Prasad's Mohiniyattam at 6.45 pm, followed by Thingom Brojen Kumar Singha & Group's Manipuri dance performance at 8pm and Priya Acote's Bharatanatyam at 9 pm will be the final performances of the dance festival.

Ends