



**Department of Tourism**

Park View Thiruvananthapuram 695 033

Kerala India Fax: +91-471-2322279

Tel: +91-471-2326579 2321132

Email: info@keralatourism.org

marketing@keralatourism.org

www.keralatourism.org

**Press Release**

**Nishagandhi Dance Fest begins on Friday (February 14)**

**Health Minister to present Nishagandhi Puraskaram to Kathak maestro Pandit Rajendra Gangani**

**Kadhakali Mela to be held parallelly along with Dance Fest**

**Thiruvananthapuram, Feb. 13:** The week-long Nishagandhi Dance Festival, one of India's iconic classical dance carnivals organised by Kerala Tourism, will get off to a colourful start at 6 pm at the Nishagandhi Auditorium in the Kanakakunnu grounds here on Friday (February 14).

Health, Women & Child Development Minister Smt. Veena George will inaugurate the festival and present the prestigious Nishagandhi Puraskaram to leading Kathak exponent Pandit Rajendra Gangani, in recognition of his outstanding contributions to Indian classical dance at a ceremony at 6 pm. The honour carries a prize money of Rs 1,50,000, citation and memento.

Pandit Gangani was selected for the honour by a jury comprising former chief secretary and writer Shri K Jayakumar, playwright and cultural personality Soorya Krishnamurthy and performer and choreographer Rajashree Warriar, with Tourism Secretary Shri K Biju as the panel Chairman and Director of Tourism Smt Sikha Surendran as Convener.

Dr Shashi Tharoor MP, Shri AA Rahim MP, Adv V K Prasanth MLA, Mayor Smt Arya Rajendran, District Panchayat President Shri Suresh Kumar and Ward Councillor Dr Reena K S will be present. Shri K Biju will welcome the gathering and Smt Sikha Surendran will propose a vote of thanks.

The festival has lined up India's best classical dancers and upcoming stars to mesmerise the audience converging at the venue. The performers are drawn from diverse Indian classical dance including Bharata Natyam, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Kathak, Sattriya and Odissi.

A Kathakali Mela featuring hundreds of Kathakali artistes will also be held alongside the seven-day festival. Kathakali performances will be held at the auditorium inside the Kanakakkunnu palace every day from 5:30 pm.

'Bali Vadham' (Feb 14), 'Kalayanasougandhikam' (Feb15), 'Baka Vadham' (Feb16), 'Nala Charitham Randam Divasam' (Feb 17), 'Kamsa Vadham' (Feb 18), 'Uthara Swayamvaram' (Feb 19), and 'Rukmangada Charitham' (Feb 20), will be performed as part of the Kathakali Mela.



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The inaugural ceremony will be followed by a Bharatanatyam performance choreographed by Parshwanath S. Upadhye & Adithya P.V of Punyah Dance Company.

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

The Nishagandhi Festival also brings alive recent trends in Indian classical dance forms and sets a stage for upcoming artists to present their talents and artistic expressions. Public entry to the festival is free.

**Ends**