



PRESS RELEASE

INDIA HERITAGE WALK FESTIVAL 2018

Deep Down in Kolkata's Chinatown

Kolkata, Feb 15: The captivating tales about the fast-dwindling diasporic Chinese settlers in Kolkata and a ringside view of their feisty Dragon Dance, the mystique and reverence surrounding a colonial-era cemetery and the cosmopolitanism of the sprawling metropolis will be expertly narrated before the local residents as part of a pioneering nationwide India Heritage Walk Festival (IHWF) this month.

IHWF 2018, a month-long, multi-city event, is organised by Sahapedia (sahapedia.org), an encyclopedia of Indian arts and culture, and YES Culture, the cultural division of YES Global Institute, a practicing think tank of YES BANK, to celebrate India's rich cultural diversity.

The first of three walks planned for Kolkata will be held on Friday, February 16, coinciding with the onset of Chinese New Year in the city's Old Chinatown or Cheenapara, which traditionally kickstarts the celebrations by organising a colourful Dragon Dance.

Radio talk show host, blogger, history buff and heritage enthusiast Deepanjan Ghosh will conduct this walk, taking the participants on a discovery trail of India's only Chinatown which witnessed the first wave of Chinese immigration over 250 years ago. The walk will then meander through the alleys and bylanes of Cheenapara for an enchanting glimpse of the tucked-away Chinese temples and social clubs revealing a unique way of the life of settlers.

Kolkata Chinatown is distinct from the rest of similar settlements around the world. With bright neon signboards, string lanterns, giant gates and upturned eaves, Cheenapara looks unremarkable from the outside. But once inside their temples, it is a completely different story, reflecting the cultural identity of the Indian Chinese community, with gilded shrines and ornate carvings depicting war narratives of imperial dynasties and gods.

The 150-minute walk, being held in partnership with 'The Cha Project' will end with Chinese roadside vendors selling steaming hot dumplings.

Debanjan Das, a keen photographer and photojournalist, will lead the second walk on February 17, guiding the participants on an exploration of Chitpur, Kolkata's first cosmopolitan address. This walk will provide a look back at the 400-year-old history of Chitpur, the most vibrant, authentic manifestation of North Kolkata but also little known. It will begin from Jorasanko Thakurbari, a beautiful heritage building and the home where Rabindranath Tagore spent his childhood. The participants can also savour the huge palaces, built by Chitpur's elite class which dominated Calcutta's economy from the 19th century onwards. These glorious historical monuments, with a mix of Mughal, classical and Victorian architectural elements, have endured as the keepers of Chitpur. The other attractions of this



walk include a visit to the ghats of Ganga and Kumartuli, the traditional potters quarter of Chitpur, a vibrant community of different ‘gharanas’ of these master craftsmen.

The third and final walk in the series on Tuesday, February 27, will take the joiners to South Park Street Cemetery, one of the world's earliest planned cemeteries and the final resting place for both famous and unknown Europeans who came to Calcutta in search of their fortunes. The 90-minute walk will begin outside the gates of this well-maintained heritage cemetery, with an overview of the town of Calcutta circa 1760 during the governor-generalship of Warren Hastings. Then it will proceed along the walkways of the cemetery, stopping by certain historically important tombs.

Noted academician Sudip Bhattacharya, who has written a book on the history of medicine in colonial Bengal, will lead the walk.

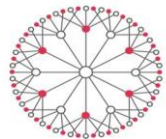
Details about the walks and other programmes of IHWF 2018, map routes and registration information are available on <http://www.indiaheritagewalkfestival.com>

Vaibhav Chauhan, Festival Director (IHWF) and Secretary, Sahapedia, says, ‘The India Heritage Walk Festival 2018 is a celebration of all that Sahapedia stands for. In an attempt to create authentic, credible, and exhaustive content on our rich heritage and culture, we are developing a network of cultural practitioners across the country. This festival is a part of this pan-India movement, making heritage spaces more popular, more accessible, and more experiential.’

Rana Kapoor, MD & CEO, YES BANK and Chairman, YES Global Institute, says “India is blessed with a rich heritage and cultural history, which is abundantly manifested in monuments and architectural sites across our country. Civil society participation in our Nation’s heritage, aided by activities such as heritage walks, is integral to the preservation and conservation of these sites. Such heritage tourism initiatives, with the wholehearted participation and involvement of local communities and citizens, have the potential to instill immense national pride and further the agenda of heritage development,”

Preeti Sinha, Global Convenor, YES Global Institute, says, “The understanding of heritage in 21st century India has expanded from the protection of historic buildings and monuments to focus on more general understanding of the wider context and preservation of tangible and intangible cultural forms. Through active engagement with built, natural and living heritage through the design of walks, talks, and digital media such as films and social forums, the festival is a touchstone for conscious thinking towards formulating historically-sensitive policy and decision making.”

IHWF 2018, covering 20 cities and towns around the country, features walks to historical monuments and shrines, well-known landscapes, places known for art and culture, cuisine and flourishing trade. There is also an online film festival of documentaries based on cultural



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themes and lecture series curated as Baithaks and Instameets as part of nearly 70 events scheduled throughout the month.