

## **Chinar Book Fair Marks a New Chapter in Kashmir's Cultural History: Long Queues of Bibliophiles at Chinar Book Festival, Srinagar**

Over 5,000 readers visited SKICC Srinagar on the first day of the Chinar Book Festival, organized by the District Administration in collaboration with the National Book Trust India, National Council for Promotion of Urdu Language, ICHR, and ISRO.

The sprawling book festival at the back lawns and rose garden of SKICC facing the picturesque Dal Lake was inaugurated by the Chairman of the Indian Council of Historical Research, Mr. Raghuvendra Tanwar, Deputy Commissioner Dr. Bilal M Bhat, Vice-Chancellor of Kashmir University, Prof. Nilofar Khan, and Chairman, National Book Trust, India in the presence of Secretary GAD, J&K Sanjeev Verma, and Director NBT-India, Sh. Yuvraj Malik.

Speaking at the inauguration Dr. Bilal M. Bhat highlighted the importance of the Chinar Book Festival, expressing his belief that the festival is a dream come true, emphasizing its significance for the people of the valley in preserving their culture, language, and art. Prof. Milind S Marathe, Chairman, NBT India echoed these sentiments, expressing that the festival is a celebration for the people of Srinagar, and Prof. Raghuvendra Tanwar congratulated everyone, expressing his view that this is the largest literary festival in the Valley ever organized.

Yuvraj Malik, Director, National Book Trust, India, emphasized the significance of the Chinar Book Festival as a confluence of books, literature, and culture, bringing together the "heaven of books" and the "heaven of the beautiful valley" for the readers. Additionally, young authors mentored under the YUVA program and students from different colleges and schools were felicitated at the inaugural ceremony.

Spanning over 60,000 square feet on the banks of Dal Lake, the festival features more than 200 stalls offering books in Urdu, English, Kashmiri, Hindi, and other Indian languages.

At the inaugural ceremony, young authors from the valley mentored under the PM YUVA program were also felicitated. Rokaya Rajab from Kupwara is writing her first book under the program in Kashmiri language titled "Democracy and the Youth", while Ms. Shaistah Jan from Baramulla is also writing in Kashmiri, the book titled "India: A Dynamic Democracy". Prior to these girls, three young writers from Jammu & Kashmir had been mentored under the program – Tahir Ahmed Lone (Kashmiri), Bharti Devi (Dogri), and Ekshu Sharma (English). Their first titles have already been published by the National Book Trust India.

11 bilingual books for children in English-Kashmiri and English-Dogri formats were released on this occasion.

At the inauguration ceremony, students from different colleges and schools who participated in two different competitions in the background of the Chinar Book festival were also felicitated.

Spread over 60,000 square feet on the banks of the beautiful Dal Lake, there are more than 200 stalls of Urdu, English, Kashmiri, Hindi, and other Indian languages. The day witnessed thousands of students standing at the book stalls with bags full of books.

A photo exhibition by the Indian Space Research Organisation and by ICHR on the history, culture, and civilization of Jammu, Kashmir, & Ladakh have been points of attraction.

A Digital reading zone has been set up – Rashtriya E-Pustakalaya (National Digital Library for Children & Adolescents) where readers can experience reading books on the tablet, mobile, etc., and get access to more than 1000 books from different publishers for free.

To facilitate easy commute, District administration and Srinagar Smart City have arranged Free Bus service from Mechanized Parking, Clock Tower (Ghana Ghar), Lal Chowk Srinagar to SKICC and back. The bus has scheduled stops at Women's college, MA road, Dal Gate Chowk, Nehru Park, Boulevard Road, and SKICC. The bus operates from 11 am to 7 pm from 17-25 August.

Day 2 of the Chinar Book festival will have a workshop on calligraphy for Children and an interactive session with experts on 'Mosaic of Art, Branding & Communication in the Digital Age'

Chinar Talks – the literary platform of the platform will have a session on Poetry & Kashmir, and the evening will witness a live performance by Mehran.

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