



Melody Queen Raj Begum launches Academy's Music fest

Noted Kashmiri singers to enthral audience for 3 days

Srinagar, June 19, 2013

In a major initiative to promote local music, J&K Academy of Art, Culture & Languages Wednesday launched a 3-day Kashmir Music Festival, combining light, folk and sufiana music performances by popular Kashmiri singers.

The highlight of the festival was its inauguration by legendary singer, Raj Begum, who enthralled Kashmiri music lovers for over five decades with her melodious voice and won awards and accolades, including the coveted Padma Shree, from within and outside Jammu & Kashmir for her mesmerizing voice.

The audience felt ecstatic when the 87-year old melody queen inaugurated the festival by singing her two old numbers '*Makke kis teathis madni laalas soze ba isteqbalas jaan*' and '*Range tchhati na myaani jaweani su jaeni yaar yiye*'. The jam packed audience responded with standing ovation and profuse clapping. It was a moment of nostalgia for her fans to listen to their favourite artist sing the numbers with as much ease and sweet voice as she had sung these with decades back.



The festival is being held at the 108-year old S. P. College in the heart of the summer capital city of Srinagar.

In her brief address, Raj Begum appreciated the Academy for organizing an event where a galaxy of singers will perform before an admiring audience. She said the new generation of singers in Kashmir was doing very well and wished them best of luck with the advice to continue working hard for attaining greater heights.

Speaking on the occasion, Secretary Academy, Khalid Bashir Ahmad, said that the festival was launched to showcase at a single place different genres of Kashmiri music including light, folk and sufiana. He hoped that it would both entertain and inform audience about rich music traditions of Kashmir. He said the Academy was actively engaged in the promotion of local music and as part of its activities was organizing regular events and programmes. He said currently a 2-month long Kashmir Folk Festival was going on at various tourist places in the valley. As many as 56 performances of *Bhand Paether*, *Dhambali* and *Chhakri* are slated to be held during the festival.



Describing Raj Begum as an iconic singer of Kashmir who has entertained many generations for five decades, Khalid said her pioneering contribution to Kashmiri music could never be forgotten. He said the noted singer lived in the hearts of millions of people who love and cherish Kashmiri music. “It was only befitting that a mega event of Kashmiri music like this festival was inaugurated by Raj Begum”,

Khalid said, adding her presence had further lifted the event. He presented a shawl to her as a token of love from the Academy and her admirers.



On the first day of the festival, eight noted singers including Waheed Jeelani, Qaisar Nizami, Raashid Jahangir, Shaista Ahmad, Qazi Rafi, Deepali Wattal, Shazia Bashir, Rehmat Ullah Ullah Khan captivated the audience with their melodious voice and popular Kashmiri numbers. A large number of music lovers, writers, poets and writers was present and enjoyed the musical evening.



The second day of the festival will see famous Kashmiri folk artists including Rashid Haafiz, Gulzar Ganai, Farooq Ahmad Ganai, Abdul Gaffar Kanihami and ---- sing *Chhakri*, the celebrated folk music of Kashmir.

On the concluding day, performances of prominent sufiana artists, Muhammad Abdullah Saitari, Mushtaq Ahmad Saaznawaz and Muhammad Yaqoob Sheikh will present *santoor* recitals.
