



ECLECTIC MIX The festival being held at Delhi's Dhyana Chand Stadium from Dec. 8-10 features Javed Akhtar (left), Wasim Barelvi, Sudhir Mishra and William Dalrymple among others



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The eighth edition of the annual **Jashn-e-Rekhta** festival includes a stellar line-up with four stages, 60-plus events and 150-plus artists

For most people, a love affair with Urdu is linked with their fascination for shayari or poetry. After all, poets like Mirza Ghalib, Faiz Ahmed Faiz and Mir Taqi Mir were instrumental in contributing to the literary richness of the language.

However, beyond the romanticism of couplets lies a treasure trove of several other art forms that showcase the beauty and richness of Urdu. This is the philosophy behind Jashn-e-Rekhta, an annual festival hosted by the Rekhta Foundation in Delhi that witnesses high footfalls for its thoughtful curation of ghazals, Sufi music, qawwali, dastangoi, panel discussions, celebrity conversations, masterclasses, and more.

Currently in its eighth edition, the festival that is being held at the Dhyana Chand Stadium in the national capital from December 8-10 is set to impress visitors with four stages, 60-plus events and 150-plus artists that include the likes of Javed Akhtar, Wasim Barelvi, Vishal and Rekha Bhardwaj, Anurag Kashyap, Sudhir Mishra, Muzaffar Ali, Juhi Babbar Soni, William Dalrymple, Sohail Hashmi and Najeeb Jung, among others.

This year will also commemorate 300 years of Mir Taqi Mir, who is known as *Khuda-i-Sukhan* or the 'God of Poetry', through various sessions and performances. "Our aim is to provide a platform to a diverse range of contributors to Urdu including scholars, writers, poets, theatre artists, orators, journalists, calligraphers, singers, folk artists and activists. This allows us to showcase the multifaceted nature of Urdu and the various ways in which it has been nurtured and

advanced," says Huma Khalil, Creative Director of the Rekhta Foundation.

Unlike other editions, this year is a ticketed event with a nominal fee. This move has been initiated based on the feedback received from attendees in the past, and at the same time, to cover a part of the expenses borne by the Rekhta Foundation for the festival.

Another aspect that Khalil highlights is the team's conscious effort this year to promote Urdu beyond glamour. "While film celebrities attract large audiences to the festival, we wanted to emphasise the depth and richness of Urdu beyond the entertainment industry. That's why we have only focused

on those who have actively worked towards its promotion in diverse ways," she adds.

Jashn-e-Rekhta will also host a curated food festival (*Aiwan-e-Zaiqa*) helmed by masters of the culinary arts hailing from Kolkata, Champaran, Lucknow and Delhi. "The culinary carnival will feature 29 food stalls, each dishing out

flavours that showcase the exquisite refinement of tastes like that of Urdu itself, turning each bite into a poetic masterpiece of flavour," shares Khalil.

There's also Rekhta Bazaar that celebrates the artistry of Urdu with skilled calligraphers like Azeem Haider (Lucknow) and Karim Calligrapher (Doha), who will not only showcase the craft but also share the secrets of their craftsmanship with the attendees.

What's next on the cards? Jashn-e-Rekhta recently made its international debut in London this October. Its next stop is Dubai in January 2024. ■

Geetika Sachdev

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