PUDUCHERRY

Heritage fest promises a journey beyond buildings

The month-long event aims to create awareness of the rich cultural and architectural heritage of Puducherry

The much-awaited annual heritage festival is round the corner, this time promising a journey to explore more than the built heritage. During a press conference held at the Alliance Francaise of Pondicherry, Sunaina Mandeen of People for Pondicherry’s Heritage (PPH), said that the month-long festival will begin on January 18.

PPH, PondyCAN and Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) began organising the annual Pondicherry Heritage Festival from 2015.

Arul from INTACH said that this is the fourth year of the festival after the collapse of Mairie building in Puducherry.

“In three years, we realised it was not just the built heritage but the entire town of Puducherry is a heritage, the streetscape is a unique factor,” he said.

The festival will open with a painting for Puducherry’s heritage. Silhouettes of the architectural heritage and streetscape, folk art forms, games and literature will be painted by students.
He added: “This year features an excursion to explore Thirubhuvanai, where three ancient Chola temples exist. There will be a heritage walk to see the tanks and farmlands of Thirubhuvanai.”

Vijay Shankar of INTACH added that the excursion will be organised on January 20. “Interested people can register on our Pondicherry Heritage Festival website. Those registered would be taken to the three Chola temples. “We will be talking about the temples and water bodies around that. Later, a shadow puppet show will be organised in Varadaraja Perumal Temple,” he said.

Varalakshmi of PPH said that people are not aware of this city’s heritage and this festival is to create awareness of the rich, cultural and architectural heritage of Puducherry.

“The support we get every year is increasing. We expect everyone’s participation,” she added.

**Tracing links**

People can look forward to the exhibition and sale of Puducherry products at the Craft Bazaar near Gandhi Thidal from January 25 to 28. This heritage festival will also trace Puducherry’s links with Indochina.

Beginning from February 12 to 18, food festivals, exhibitions and open house will be organised to celebrate the coastal town’s link with Indochina.

Helene Guetat-Bernard, Head of the Social Sciences Department at the French Institute of Pondicherry, said that on January 27, the IFP will be open for the public to take a look at the photo archives and the collection of palm leaves.

Alliance Francaise of Pondicherry Director Gerard Greverand, who welcomed the audience, said that Puducherry seems to be an open air museum.

“As the new director of Alliance Francaise of Pondicherry, I feel the question of heritage is very important and that I have to take care of the heritage building like a fragile baby. This wonderful building is damaged over the years and needs to be resorted. My next work is to restore the building,” he said.

Ruth Sequeira, Manager-Communications at Hidesign India Private Limited and Bitasta Samantray of PPH were present.