

British Council's Festival for the Future programme to boost UK-India collaboration in the festivals sector

- *Aims to build capacity and enhance skills of professionals working in the sector*
- *Partners with Kolkata Centre for Creativity to organise first Festival Connections workshop around Audience Development Insight in Kolkata*

Kolkata, 30 August 2019: British Council's – Festivals for the Future – launches in 2019 in India. A new three-year arts programme, it is focused on supporting the long-term development, economic empowerment, and systemic change of India's emerging festivals sector.

The programme addresses these ambitions by working with festival practitioners, leaders, artists and stakeholders by providing access to skills development and training, connecting a wide-ranging network of festivals, and supporting a platform for discuss and the exchanges of ideas that will enable growth to the Indian festival sector. The programme has two primary strands Festivals Academy and Festival Connections.

Festival Connections – An annual programme of expertise, knowledge, and networking between India and the UK – is a series of thematic hub events linked to Festivals for the Future and the Festivals Academy, across British Council areas in India.

In response to sector needs and demand, Festival Connections brings senior managers, artists, and a variety of stakeholders together to exchange, discuss, and share issues relevant to the festival sector, as an informal mechanism for learning, skills and capacity development.

Speaking on the occasion, **Dr. Debanjan Chakrabarti, Director British Council East and Northeast India** said, *"We are excited to launch our Festival Connections programme in Kolkata, in partnership with Kolkata Centre for Creativity. A part of the Festivals for the Future programme, this initiative will connect and support the professionalisation of the burgeoning festivals sector in India and the UK. There are over 150 festivals in the UK and in India the creative industries has grown by 18% since 2017. This underlines the economic and employment opportunities in this vibrant sector. I believe this programme will provide an impetus to the nascent yet promising festivals sector in India, which will not only showcase arts, culture and crafts in India but also create employment opportunities for youth."*

The first workshop under Festivals Connections called 'Audience Development Insights for the Arts' was organised in Kolkata on 30th August. Experts from both India and the UK delved into best practices in the sector. Speakers included Ananya Bhattacharya, Director, banglanatak.com, who spoke on forming international connections, Malavika Banerjee, Director, Tata Steel Kolkata Literary Meet, who spoke on effective communications and Reena Dewan, Associate Vice President, Kolkata Centre for Creativity, who elaborated on reimagining spaces. Penny Mills and Jonathan Goodacre of Audience Agency, UK shared insights on the development of festivals and on audience management. Speakers also discussed methods of audience development both through artistic spaces and international collaborations, and through developing and using audience data for long term value.

Practitioners of the sector in Kolkata and the nearby region attended the sessions. The hub event series will be conducted subsequently in other cities such as Bengaluru, Mumbai and Delhi.

About British Council:

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We work with over 100 countries in the fields of arts and culture, English language, education and civil society. Last year we reached over 80 million people directly

and 791 million people overall including online, broadcasts and publications. We make a positive contribution to the countries we work with – changing lives by creating opportunities, building connections and engendering trust. Founded in 1934 we are a UK charity governed by Royal Charter and a UK public body. We receive 15 per cent core funding grant from the UK government. www.britishcouncil.in

About Festival Connections

British Council India's Festival Connections series addresses India's vibrant cultural festival sector. As a part of the organisation's activities in the arts, the programme aims to support festival teams through upskilling workshops, peer sharing sessions, and opportunities to connect with the national network of Indian festival managers. From August 2019 to March 2020, sessions across cities will explore myriad aspects of the management of a cultural festival through the experience of festival veterans, emerging talent, and creative professionals from the industry.

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