

IKBF sparks deeper understanding between West Bengal and the UK

- *UK Theme Country Pavilion inaugurated by **Mamata Banerjee, Hon'ble Chief Minister, West Bengal** brings the best of UK literature, education, art and culture to Kolkata*
- *Largest pavilion with experiential and Instagram-able elements such as the iconic London telephone booth, Digital Library and the Future of English exhibition*

Kolkata, 19 January 2024: Till 31st January, the Central Park Mela Ground in Salt Lake, Kolkata, is going to be home to one of the biggest literary events, the **47th International Kolkata Book Fair (IKBF)**. The United Kingdom (UK) is the focal theme country at the IKBF 2024 – the fourth time overall. West Bengal and the UK have a long-standing relationship that spans literature, English language training, collaboration in arts and culture, and scholarly exchange between students and academics.

The UK Theme Country Pavilion, inaugurated by the **Hon'ble Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee** in the presence of **Alex Ellis CMG, British High Commissioner** and **Alison Barrett MBE, Director India, British Council** stands at the heart of the IKBF. The UK pavilion offers visitors and the youth of Kolkata a deeper view into the UK culture and expertise, and the opportunities sparked by the partnership between the two entities.

Coinciding with the 75th anniversary of the British Council's presence in India, the UK Pavilion is showcasing the best of the UK literature, culture and academic excellence. Visitors can enjoy multiple experiences spanning access to books across genres, a digital library, sessions with authors, discussions with UK academics and experts, an enriching view into the 'Future of English' and access to information on studying in some of the best world's best academic institutions in the UK.

Speaking at the IKBF, **Alison Barrett MBE, Director India, British Council**, said, "We are thrilled at the initial excitement around the UK Theme Country Pavilion at the International Kolkata Book Fair. The West Bengal-UK ties in literature go back a long way and have paved the way for the opportunities and partnerships in the present and the future. We are bringing the best of the UK to Kolkata at the IKBF that coincides with the British Council's 75th anniversary in India."

"Over the next two weeks, visitors from all backgrounds can find a reason to visit the UK theme country pavilion – whether listening to authors and experts, indulging in quizzes, exploring educational opportunities in the UK or simply creating memories through photos against iconic UK backdrops such as the Telephone Booths or the Shard – the tallest building in the UK. We would like to congratulate the Booksellers and Publishers Guild for the mega event and look forward to our continued partnership with them in the years to come," she added.

The first day of the 47th International Kolkata Book Fair (Friday, January 19, 2024) has a series of captivating events at the UK Pavilion. At 4:00 PM, attendees can join **Michael Wilson**, Professor



of Drama and Head of Creative Arts at Loughborough University, for a thought-provoking "GREAT Talk" on storytelling as collective thinking about climate change. Followed by a session with author **Nandini Das** at 5:00 PM.

At 6.30pm, **Roma Agrawal MBE**, a structural engineer, shares insights on "Three Bridges." **Dr. Robert Potts** discusses "**New Creative Worlds: AI and Robotics at the Frontiers of Innovation**" at 6:45 PM, offering a fascinating exploration.

The weekend promises more enriching experiences, including micro-bit judging, literature and language learning discussions, and an intriguing exploration of "Digital Storytelling and Slow Storytelling" with Michael Wilson at 4:00 PM on Saturday, January 20, 2024. The coming days will feature a diverse range of events, from discussions on the future of non-human resources to talks by acclaimed authors **Sebastian Faulks** and **Indrajit Hazra**. Visitors can also indulge in open quizzes, crafting sessions for children, and intriguing discussions on translation, languages, and popular culture.

Highlights of the UK Theme Country Pavilion:

- **Vibrant Education, Science, and Creativity:** The UK Pavilion will provide a captivating exploration of the vibrant education, science, and creative sectors of the UK. Engaging exhibits and interactive displays will facilitate an immersive experience for attendees.
- **Future of English Exhibition:** A focal point of the UK Pavilion, the 'Future of English' exhibition will showcase the global impact and influence of the English language. Interactive displays will captivate visitors, highlighting the evolving role and significance of English worldwide.
- **Cultural Exchange and Understanding:** The UK Pavilion is set to play host to a series of events and activities aimed at fostering cultural exchange and deeper understanding between the UK and India. Thought-provoking discussions will enrich the intellectual and literary atmosphere of the fair.
- **Literary and Intellectual Discussions:** As the theme country, the UK will present a distinguished lineup of speakers at the International Kolkata Book Fair and the associated Kolkata Literature Festival, contributing to the enrichment of literary and intellectual dialogues.

About the British Council

The British Council is the UK's international organisation for cultural relations and educational opportunities. We support peace and prosperity by building connections, understanding and trust between people in the UK and countries worldwide. We do this through our work in arts and culture, education and the English language. We work with people in over 200 countries and territories and are on the ground in more than 100 countries. In 2022–23 we reached 600 million people.

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