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## SAARC literature festival is bridging barriers in the Capital

DELHI ([HTTP://WWW.HINDUSTANTIMES.COM/DELHI](http://www.hindustantimes.com/delhi))

Updated: Feb 25, 2017 20:27 IST


 Naina Arora (<http://www.hindustantimes.com/columns/naina-arora>)  
 Hindustan Times


Novelist Ajeet Cour, the brainchild behind the event, poses with foreign delegates.

In an initiative to spread the message of peace and love, the South Asian Literature Festival is being held in the capital. Themed on topics such as Beyond Borders, Endeavours for Peace and Tranquillity in the Region, Literature Against Extremism and Terrorism, and New Voices in Literature, the festival is seeing delegates, authors, poets from all SAARC

nations in Delhi for insightful discussion at the Academy of Fine Arts and Literature. The festival is being organised by Foundation of SAARC Writers and Festival (FOSWAL), an apex body of SAARC countries that includes countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

In the fest, noted speakers include Rajmohan Gandhi, Kapila Vatsyayan, AK Rashid, Abdul Ghafoor Liwal, Ashraf Jewel, Bimal Guha, Lily Wangchuk, Chador Wangmo from several SAARC countries.

Writer Tarannum Riyaz, speaking on the festival, says, "All from different sections of life descend to the festival to promote peace on the planet. I don't like to be called a feminist writer, but I am planning to recite couple of feminist poems. My session will be around poetry. We don't have any Pakistani participants this time around because of the political relations and tensions in the country. There are peace loving people who are upset with what is happening in the world. Last time, too, the participants were asking about them."



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Poet and critic Subroto Bondo, famous for works such as Muse of Murmur, Metropolis, Zillionth of Shades of Din, will recite verses on the urban life. Renowned poet, Jayanta Mahapatra's session will focus on the contemporary poetry scene. He says, "Poetry has taken much of time all through my life in the last 50 years. I would like to speak about the problems faced by the SAARC nations and poetry written about it. It's interesting and exciting to note that more social and political problems are taken care of in the neighbouring countries than in India. We should be talking about what we basically see, hear, and what plagues us."

FOSWAL launched its vision of cultural bonding among the neighbouring SAARC countries in 1986, and emerged as the first and the only non-government organisation working for Track II 'Public Diplomacy', in the specific area of culture, for creating cultural connectivity through a think tank of Intellectuals and writers, creative fraternity and peace activists, folklore-buddhist-Sufi Scholars among others.

The initiative of cultural connectivity among the SAARC countries was a brainchild of writer-novelist, Ajeet Cour. She says, "It is almost 30 years of continuous endeavour to co-join the hearts and minds of the people of eight SAARC countries through culture and literature. This is the 53rd mega Festival. Besides different cities in India, we have been organising SAARC Festivals of Literature in Dhaka, Kathmandu, Lahore, Islamabad, Colombo, Kandy, Thimphu. So far we have organised 53 major SAARC cultural and literary events, festivals of folklore, conferences on Buddhism and Sufism, in all the countries of the SAARC region."

**FACTS**

- What: South Asian Literature Festival
- Where: Academy of Fine Arts & Literature, 4/6 Siri Fort Institutional area, Opp gate no:2 of Siri fort auditorium, New Delhi
- When: February 25-26
- Timings: 10am to 6.30pm

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