

AKLF presents  
**Oxford Junior Literary Festival - a 2 young reader's festival**  
Launch of Priti Paul's ABCDesi, Unicef@70compaign  
Shashi Tharoor speaks of child rights  
**A carnival comes alive at the grounds of historic  
St. Paul's Cathedral**

**Kolkata, 15th – 16<sup>th</sup> January:** The first edition of **Oxford Junior Literary Festival (OJLF) a two day literary festival (15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Jan)** for young readers was inaugurated with a musical performance by chief guests - 350 children - from Future Hope NGO and from several shelters outside Kolkata. OJLF created **Fun with Chinese Opera** – a Chinese Opera mask making by Susanna Goho Quek - a writer, illustrator, artist, and an art curator ; hosted **Monsters, Songsters and Much Such Madness** with Anushka Ravishankar, popular children's writer and **Unhappy Moon**, a storytelling session about a playful moon by author Saraswathi Menon and illustrator Proiti Roy . **In Our Own Voice** - a creative presentation by Future Hope students ; **In My Head**, the craft of the monologue ; **Starting Up: New Writers for Young Readers** with Arya Rajam and Shubhra Shah Agarwal where students interacted with young writers and **Being the Change** wherein Young writer-activist Yassmin Abdel-Magied and Youth ki Awaaz pioneer Anshul Tewari discussed the challenges and dreams with students were hosted by OJLF including a dramatized reading of **The Why Why Girl** who never stops asking questions, as a **tribute to Mahasweta Devi**.

AKLF introduced **Tiny Stories**, a global campaign by UNICEF@70 with Shashi Tharoor, author, United Nations peace-keeper, and human rights activist during OJLF. 100s of mid and senior school students penned their 7 line 'tiny stories' on the theme of a 'A Better World for Every Child' for the global campaign by UNICEF@70. UNICEF engaged with authors for their **#TinyStories** initiative and organized workshops with select authors and children to encourage them to write on "What I hope for every child". The stories/ poem on the theme of bettering children's lives will be submitted to UNICEF and form part of their global campaign, both online and in book form.

Priti Paul's **ABCDesi**, an unusual first book of english alphabets and Indian imagery was released by veteran educationist Sister Cyril during OJLF with a specially curated interactive performance by well-known dancer Anita Ratnam. **ABCDesi Live!** Was carried to day 2 of OJLF with **My ABC** an alphabet painting on the ABCDesi theme of local images with leading artist Wasim Kapoor for the age group of 11-14 years. Expressing his joy to be part of the initiative **Mr. Kapoor** said, "*With each stroke of the brush, an artist paints another word on his canvas and words blend effortlessly -creating visual poetry.*" An alphabet book with a distinct Indian Flavor, ABC Desi is an attempt to pique curiosity and appreciation for this unique art form in both children and adults across the globe. The book is a visual celebration and hopes to be a rich source of cultural reference and inspiration. The imperfection and flawed beauty of hand painted creations juxtaposed with bold typography and clean contemporary layouts, makes ABC Desi a unique learning tool for children.

Replete with live literary characters, selfie and tattoo booths spread across the grounds of the historic St. Paul's Cathedral, OJLF really set the benchmark of how children must be nurtured as the world's future. *"Building on its commitment to promoting a love of reading and books amongst future readers, Oxford Bookstores initiates Oxford Junior Literary Festival, a literary festival curated and designed to attract and engage young boys and girls, from just-reading to Young Adult age-groups. This year we inaugurate OJLF at our AKLF, which has in any case always included a children's segment, and an interschool programme. Including international and nationally popular writers for children, the emphasis is on creative interactivity and children's involvement, AKLF Festival Director Anjum Katyal said"*

**In Our Own Voice** - a creative presentation by Future Hope students was hugely appreciated. **Sujata Sen, CEO, NGO Future Hope** whose children joined OJLF alongwith many others from shelters outside Kolkata right from the inauguration said, *"We are delighted to be part of Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2017. Future Hope believes in inclusive education and our children will get access to a huge amount of exciting writing and discussions at Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival."*

A special event curated to pay **Tribute to Mahasweta Devi** - a dramatized reading of **The Why Why Girl** was followed by an interaction with the audience. *"Why Why Girl questions everything in life and later realizes that she will find all the answers in school education... Through expressions, voice modulation and sometimes props, Dramatised Reading helps in reaching out to the audience in much more effective manner", said Ramanjit Kaur, Artistic Director, The Creative Arts,* Kolkata's leading theatre group of and with children who curated the tribute.

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### **Notes to Editors**

**About Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival 2017:** Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival is India's first major literary initiative of the year, India's only literary festival created by a bookstore and Kolkata's first literary festival. AKLF's eighth edition from Jan 15– 18 is woven around conversations to make the world a more inclusive place. Spotighting Kolkata's unique cultural heritage of inclusiveness, the programme of AKLF 2017 was announced aboard a cruise on the banks of the Ganges. Created by the nearly 100 year old Oxford Bookstore, the Festival programming spans the entire spectrum of inclusion, from women and children to the underprivileged, including a tribute to the late Mahasweta Devi who brought the most marginalized into the fold of literature. The era of Post Truth, where facts are fast losing out to rhetoric, the reality globally, will be discussed by experts; as will be the impact of different media on our reality today. Every evening for three days, AKLF will pay tribute to Nobel Laureate Bob Dylan through poetry and contemporary music at Poetry Café and Plug in, hosted at the festival's main venue – St. Paul's Cathedral grounds – chosen for its welcoming, accessible and inclusive nature. For the first time, Oxford Bookstores will host Oxford Junior Literary Festival (OJLF), a two-day festival to be held on 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Jan for young readers. Renowned children's authors, publishers of children's books, storytelling and creativity will form part of OJLF. This year, AKLF

has tied up with UNICEF@70 to conduct its global short stories campaign titled “Tiny Stories” at OJLF. AKLF 2017 will be held at St Paul’s Cathedral, established in 1847, and Oxford Bookstore, established in 1919. The festival’s closing event will be hosted at St John’s Church, built in 1787. The Festival conversations will also be hosted at Royal Calcutta Turf Club, Tollygunge Club, the campus of iLead & Presidency University, Daga Nikunj and the Harrington Street Arts Centre.

**UNICEF@70:** 2017 marked the 70th anniversary of UNICEF’s work for children to celebrate this occasion UNICEF has invited writers from all over the world to pen a short story on the theme ‘what I want for every child’. More than 200 authors have answered the call, weaving their vision of a world in which all children enjoy the right to survive and thrive, to learn and to grow up healthy and safe from harm. Over 200 prominent writers, including Chimamanda Adichie, Paulo Coelho, Christina Lamb and Nuruddin Farah, have joined this campaign last year, penning ‘tiny stories’ of around seven lines each to highlight the injustice so many of the world’s poorest and most disadvantaged children still face.

The short story series kicks off UNICEF’s commemoration of its 70th year working to bring help and hope to every child. The short stories will be shared by some of the world’s most celebrated writers with their own social media audiences. The First Lady of Finland, Jenni Haukio, introduced the concept, which gained global momentum with writers joining from Asia, Africa, South America, Europe, the Middle East and Australia.

Supporting the initiative celebrated Nigerian author Chimamanda Adichie, said, “As writers we are able to advocate through the simplicity of storytelling. With this worthy and necessary campaign, we advocate for the protection of the rights of precious children all over the world,”

The group of writers, whose genres range from fairy tales to fiction, include one the world’s youngest published authors, seven-year-old South African, Michelle Nkamankeng. Written in over 10 languages and varying in style, all stories illustrate that the rights of many children are still neglected.

The campaign comes at a time when there are increasing threats to child rights. Over 50 million children have been uprooted from their homes due to conflict, poverty and climate change and millions more are facing unspeakable violence in their communities. Around 263 million children are out of school and last year nearly six million children under five died from mostly preventable diseases. The lives of many children are still so heavily impacted by the horror of conflict, inequality, poverty and discrimination. We hope these Tiny Stories can remind the world that we must sustain our commitment to all of these children whose lives and futures are at stake.

**AKLF 2017 Partners and Associations:** The AKLF 2017 edition has forged several new, prestigious associations, to add to its impressive repertoire of collaborations since the first edition in 2010. We are proud to have as our partners major national and international institutions and corporates such as the Australian Council for the Arts, Alliance Française, Australian High Commission, Instituto Cervantes, Consulate General of Italy, MAKAIAS, Presidency University, Future Hope, UNICEF, The Teacher’s Centre, Jaipur Literary Festival, Sahitya Akademi, Development Corporation Limited (DCL), Vivada Cruises, FACES, Open Doors, The Creative Arts, Zoomcar, Art Rickshaw, Times Fibrefill, Aishee, Sienna and several others. A wide cross section

of publishers like Niyogi Books, Future, Oxford University Press, Tulika, Duckbill, NBDS The Book Council are also partnering with us. Venue partners include Tollygunge Club, iLead, Harrington Street Art Centre, Alka Jalan Foundation and Royal Calcutta Turf Club. We welcome 93.5 Red FM as our radio partner, Vistara as aviation partner, Typhoo as beverage partner, Kenilworth as hospitality partner, Apollo Gleneagles Hospitals as wellness partner. AKLF is very proud of these associations and hopes to keep growing year on year.

**About Oxford Bookstores:** Established in 1919, Oxford Bookstore is the best equipped 'base-camp' for journeys of the mind offering its customers the widest range of outstanding titles and consistently courteous and informed service for close to a century. Today, with stores in major metros, India's first dedicated Children's bookstore, Oxford Junior, India's first of its kind tea boutique, Cha Bar, India's only literary festival created by a bookstore, Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival, Oxford Bookstore offers booklovers access to the very best in publishing enhanced by a variety of events which salute books, visual & performing arts and celebrate the word. Oxford Bookstore measures its success by the smiles on millions of happy customers that the brand has served over the last nearly 100 years. There are a few treats as sumptuous as a visit to Oxford Bookstore in India. Each time you walk into our iconic store in Kolkata where the brand started in 1919, its charm leaves you wanting for more. Our fleet of happy to help expert booksellers and informed hosts work day and night to bring to customers world class reading experience be it through our books or our fine teas and live by the brand's motto - Much more than a bookstore – at every Bookstore. For more information, please also log on to: [www.oxfordbookstore.com](http://www.oxfordbookstore.com)

### **Bios**

**Anita Ratnam:** A highly respected performer, writer, speaker, arts entrepreneur and culture mentor. She uses voices, singing, Vedic hymns, drumming, and contemporary mythology in her performances. Her acclaimed choreographies include *SEVEN GRACES*, *NEELAM*. Ratnam has founded Narthaki.com, the largest portal on Indian dance in the virtual world and restored the 15th century theatre ritual performance of *KAISIKA NATAKAM* in her ancestral village temple of Tirukurungudi in Tamilnadu. She is in the Executive Board of the Sangeet Natak Akademi.

**Anushka Ravishankar:** An award winning author of children's books, and co-founder of Duckbill Books, publishing house. Often referred to as India's Dr.Seuss, her most popular works include *Catch that Crocodile!*, *Elephants Never Forget* and *Tiger on a Tree*. She collaborates with artists from South Africa, Switzerland, Italy and India.

**Saraswathi Menon:** Sociologist who has been appointed as a panelist for UN Peace Actions. She is a former lecturer of the Madras University, who has pursued a doctorate in sociology from JNU. She is the director of United Nations Development Programme at the Evaluation Office. Her knowledge about Women and developmental issues has enabled her to lead the UN as the director of policy division for women, gender equality and empowerment of Women.

**Shashi Tharoor:** Indian politician and a former diplomat who is currently serving as Member of Parliament, Lok Sabha (from Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala since 2009). He also currently serves as Chairman of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs. Tharoor is also an

acclaimed writer, having authored 15 bestselling works of fiction and non-fiction since 1981, all of which are centred on India and its history, culture, film, politics, society, foreign policy, and more. His most distinguished works are *The Great Indian Novel*, *Riot*, *Nehru: The Invention of India* and *An Era Of Darkness* that has recently been published in November, 2016.

**Priti Paul: Director, Apeejay Surrendra Group**, Educated at the prestigious Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard University and Architectural Association School of Architecture, UK, Royal Institute of British Architects, Priti Paul has been at the forefront of taking over the business of the century old Apeejay Surrendra Group post her father's assassination in 1990. Since then, she has spearheaded the real estate division of the Group which included expanding the business of the Oxford Bookstore in India and abroad, launched India's first gallery on new media art – Apeejay Media Gallery, conceptualized, designed and launched a range of projects in India and abroad and set up the London Office of Apeejay Shipping Limited.

Priti Paul, is also the creative force behind the iconic Oxford Bookstore, the best equipped 'base-camp' for journeys of the mind established in 1919. In 1995, on the Heritage store's platinum anniversary, the iconic store was refashioned as Oxford Bookstore - Gallery. Since then, she has made Oxford into India's favourite bookstore, taking the Brand to unprecedented heights and across India. She is also the creator of ABC Desi, an alphabet book with a distinct Indian flavour, handcrafted using various techniques giving a charming new life to the typical ABC book, through the revival of the almost lost Indian craft of billboard painting. The book is a visual celebration and a rich source of cultural reference and inspiration. She has also been at the forefront of education for children coming from economically weaker sections of the society which is manifested through the Apeejay Anand Children's Library run for the benefit of street children. Priti Paul is a member of prestigious organizations like Royal Institute of British Architects, Women in Shipping and Trade Association (WISTA), England, India Committee of American Bureau of Shipping, USA, FICCI Committee of Art and Business of Art, India, Harvard Club India, MIT Club India. In 2013, she was conferred with an honorary degree of Doctorate of Business Administration by the Rai University, India.

**Sister M. Cyril:** Educational innovator who is a native of Ireland and a Sister of the Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. A recipient of the Padma Shri Award in 2007 has played a pivotal role in bringing about quality education for underprivileged children in rural and urban areas since 1956. She became the Principal of Loreto Day School Sealdah since 1979.

**Proiti Roy:** Illustrator of Children's books. She graduated in Fine Arts from Kala Bhavan, Shantiniketan. She has also been involved as a graphic designer in advertising and manufacturing. Apart from working with handicrafts, she has taught art and craft to children in Kolkata.

**Wasim Kapoor:** Artist and painter. Kapoor has always been a central figure on the Indian art scene. He has been exhibiting his works in solo and group shows for more than thirty years now, and seems to have achieved more in this time than most artists do in their entire careers. He has contributed proceeds from some of his sales towards a leprosy centre and even taken part in the Picasso centenary exhibition by Calcutta painters in 1981. His series like *Nudes* and *Silence* have been widely appreciated.

**Shubhra Shah Agarwal:** Author of Leatherback's Big Win, currently lives in Kolkata. She has finished her high school from *La Martiniere for Girls* (Kolkata) and college from St. Xavier's College (Kolkata). She is currently taking a one year counseling course from Kornash lifestyle management course.

**Yassmin Abdel-Magied:** Mechanical engineer, social advocate, writer and petrol head, she is the 2015 Queensland Young Australian of the Year. She advocates for the empowerment of youth, women and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds and founded Youth Without Borders at age 16. Her new book *Yassmin's Story: Who do you think I am* has received both critical and popular acclaim.

**Anshul Tiwari:** An Ashoka Fellow and the Founder and Editor-in-Chief of YouthKiAwaaz.com (YKA), which is India's largest online platform for young people to express themselves on issues of importance. He also serves as a Director on the Board of Collectively, a World Economic Forum and Unilever collaborative non-profit, to help make the future better. He was recently invited to speak at the United Nations Forum on Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law.

**Arya Rajam:** Rajam was born in New York and raised in India. She came into the limelight with her interesting and engaging first novel on the life of a ballet dancer, *Blood, Sweat and Tears* (2013). Much inspired by writers like Daphne Du Maurier, her writing brings together the elements of romance, drama and real life experiences of dancers. Influenced by several generations of women in her family, which includes her mother famous danseuse Anita Ratnam, Arya has formed a great love for the arts, especially dance, music, theater and couture fashion. She is deeply committed to encouraging young students to pursue a literary profession, and does so by traveling to several high schools pan India, to give talks on the subject.

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**For more information, please contact:**