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## **Streetkids from Kathmandu kick off this year's MELA festival**

The 11<sup>th</sup> Edinburgh MELA officially opened today (Saturday 3 September) at Pilrig Park with its biggest and most exciting line-up to date.

Speaking this morning at the official opening of the MELA festival in Pilrig Park, The Rt Hon Lesley Hinds, Lord Provost of Edinburgh said:

"I am thrilled to welcome everyone to the two day Edinburgh Mela festival, now in it's eleventh year.

What is uniquely special about the Mela is that it is a celebration of Edinburgh's multiculturalism and diversity. We live in a truly inspiring city and much of its character stems from acceptance of the many cultures represented in our communities.

As Chair of the Mela I know that people come to enjoy themselves. I hope that during your visit you will be surprised, you will be amused and you will be entertained. And I am sure that you will see something or hear something new that will capture your imagination and which you will always remember."

Saturday's programme is packed with events and world-class entertainment including;

- **The ROKPA Himalayan Dancers** - who are ten street kids from the ROKPA Children's Home in Kathmandu on tour in Scotland as part of the ROKPA charity's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.
- Indian Classical Dancers **Shree Natya Niketan** from Tamil Nadu in Southern India
- Classical Bharatanatyam dance from **Priya Sreekumar** and **Jayachandra Kumar** from Kerala
- Contemporary **Bollywood** dance from the London Dance Studios

Elsewhere in the park the festive atmosphere continues with the **Jaipur Kawa Brass Band**, **Te Pooka circus** workshops, choirs from the Congo, talent spotters from Asian soap drama '**Silver Street**' and hundreds of stalls selling authentic jewellery, food stuffs and traditional clothing.

Saturday evening's music programme kicks off with Desi vocals and Garage tunes from **DJ Bobby** and **MC Intensity**, followed by international chart success **Legacy**

fronted by the mighty Tariq Khan, and **Raghav** South East Asia's biggest pop sensation who is now a truly international superstar.

Dana Macleod from Out of the Blue Productions, producers of this year's MELA programme said:

"This year's line-up is fantastic and reflects the international quality of the Edinburgh MELA which is recognised nationally as one of the best multi-cultural festivals in the UK.

Sunday's programme of entertainment and music continues with massive Bhangra pioneers **Alaap** headlining alongside Bollywood Bhangra musicians **B21** - chart hitters from Birmingham and cutting edge tunes from **DJ Zeus** whose album 'Unda Da Influence' was one of the biggest sellers in the UK last year.

Last year over 40,000 people attended the festival over the two days and this year with the good weather the expectation is for an even bigger turn out. Already Friday evening's Sakhian or Ladies only night welcomed a record 500 women and children to Pilrig Park for an evening of dancing, music and song.

The Edinburgh Mela is funded by the City of Edinburgh Council, the Scottish Arts Council, and project-managed by Out of the Blue.

For further information please contact: Colman Getty Scotland PR on 0131 558 8851 or email Emma Henderson: 07977 134 614 Rebecca Salt: 07970 783 213 email [rebecca@colmangettypr.co.uk](mailto:rebecca@colmangettypr.co.uk)

## NOTES TO EDITORS

1. The Edinburgh Mela 2005 takes place on 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> September at Pilrig Park, off Leith Walk, 12noon until 9pm daily.

2. Events in the Main Marquee, which can accommodate up to 1,000, are ticketed and there is a £10 charge for entry to see all performances after 6pm on the main stage. For tickets call The Mela office on 0131 557 1400. Entrance to the Festival, and events in all other venues, are free.

3. For full details of this year's Edinburgh MELA programme and for press passes to all events - please contact Colman Getty PR on 07977 134614, 07970 783213

4. In 2004 more than 40,000 people attended the festival, including over 4,000 children.

5. The Edinburgh Mela was founded in 1995 by members of Edinburgh's Pakistani, Indian and Bangladeshi communities, and one of its key objectives from the outset was to reflect and celebrate Scotland's cultural diversity, while retaining its roots in the South Asian communities.

6. Main Sponsors of the 2005 Edinburgh Mela are Health Scotland, Royal Bank of Scotland, Western Union, Unison and Cairn Energy