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Renowned writers open Literary Festival in Galle

World-famous authors Gore Vidal and Vikram Seth launched the second International Literary Festival in Galle today. The event, dubbed the “No. 1 Literary Festival in the world” by Harpers Bazaar after its inception last year, promises to live up to that billing yet again with hundreds of book lovers flocking to Sri Lanka from around the island and the globe to enjoy an impressive line-up of celebrated writers and a varied programme of cultural and educational events.

The five-day programme of writing workshops and competitions, panel discussions, topical debates on issues such as climate change, poetry readings, theatre and children’s activities is being staged in and around the magnificent and historic UN World Heritage Fort, which organisers say is the perfect setting for the Festival. Highlights include acclaimed novelist, essayist and playwright Gore Vidal talking about his six-decade writing career and a rare chance to meet and listen to the renowned poet and novelist Vikram Seth. Creator of the international best selling series The No 1 Ladies’ Detective Agency, Alexander McCall Smith is another high profile newcomer to the Festival. Other highlights include journalist Simon Winchester, historian William Dalrymple and award winning cookery writer and TV chef, Sophie Grigson.

Numerous renowned Sri Lankan authors are also taking part with Jean Arasanayagam, Carl Muller, Punyakante Wijenaik, Shyam Selvadurai and Yasmine Gooneratne among the most notable. Organisers believe this year’s Festival will play an even greater role in helping to put Sri Lankan Literature on the world map, as many talent-spotting publishers from around the globe are attending. Speaking at today’s launch, Festival Director Libby Southwell said there was a real buzz in the Galle Fort as visitors prepared to meet their favourite international and Sri Lankan authors and to take part in the wonderful range of events and activities this year. Novelist, poet and literary critic Yasmine Gooneratne added: “This Festival is a celebration of the use of the English language, written, heard or spoken. It’s all about the ways in which language and communication help improve educational opportunities, stimulate debate and act as a force for change.”

Festival organisers have worked hard to develop the community aspect of the Festival with many free events available, a local school debating competition, teachers from the Southern Province and university students receiving free passes to attend. It’s this aspect of the Festival that has also attracted high profile sponsors such as Sri Lanka Telecom. Mrs Pat Abayasekara, Chief Corporate Officer of Sri Lanka Telecom, explained: “The Galle Literary Festival is not only attracting hundreds of much-needed visitors from overseas, but is also achieving some outstanding work in the community. We are extremely proud to be working closely with the organisers to help them develop this aspect of the Festival even further.”

Sri Lanka Tourism, the Festival Host through its Promotions Bureau, believes the Festival to be an excellent opportunity for travellers to appreciate and enjoy Sri Lanka’s rich cultural heritage, beaches and beautiful landscape as well as to make the most of the attractive line up of events. Renton de Alwis, Chairman of Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority and Sri Lanka Promotions Bureau said: “The Galle Literary Festival is encouraging people from around the world to come, see and experience how much Sri Lanka has to offer in this treasured island - her beauty, her history, her culture and people and of course, its literature. We are delighted to be associated with this prestigious and exciting event as its host.”



Over the next four days, Festival-goers will be spoilt for choice with around 10 events a day. Journalists, chefs, adventurers and historians also feature in the line-up, there will be chances to meet authors informally at literary lunches and dinners and there are excellent activities for children including recycled art and chess. Full details of the programme, where and how to get tickets and other useful information are available on the Festival website at www.galleliteraryfestival.com. Tickets can be purchased at the Festival Box Office in Galle.

The Galle Literary Festival is proudly sponsored by Festival Partner - Sri Lanka Telecom, Festival Host - Sri Lanka Tourism Promotions Bureau as well as Sri Lankan Airlines, Jetwing Hotels, Sri Lanka Ports Authority, Etv, Amangalla, Printcare, University of Melbourne, The Fortress, Wijeya Newspapers Ltd, Emirates, Dilmah, Pyxle, Embassy of the United States of America, Hemtours, Efm, British Council, Penguin India, Taru Villas, The Sun House, The Dutch House, Intrepid, Aditya, WaterMark, Barefoot, Rithihi, MAS Fabric Park, Kahanda Kanda, Six Senses Spa & Resorts and Favourite International.

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