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Plus

Let's talk literature

Galaxy of international and local authors at literary festival to be held in Galle

By Esther Williams

Booker Prize winner Kiran Desai will be among a host of international authors who will be in Sri Lanka for the country's first literary festival, The Galle Literary Festival to be held from January 10 to 14, 2007. The event will see a galaxy of authors from both the international and local arena talk about their books, their inspirations and their passions.



Kiran Desai

An estimated 500-700 visitors (70% local and 30% international) are expected at the event that will be on lines similar to those held annually in the UK and other countries.

To advance literature, defend free expression, and foster international literary fellowship are among the key objectives of the festival.

Festival Director, Libby Southwell outlining their preparations over the past two months said some of the sessions will be held in Galle against the magnificent backdrop of the fort - a World Heritage site. Other individual events will be held at memorable venues that would enable visitors to explore the rich culture and history of the coastline and villages of the Southern Province. "We want to promote Sri Lankan authors' contributions to literature and portray a positive image of Sri Lanka in the current context," she added.



Apart from Desai, the 2006 Man Booker Prize winner who will talk *Mark Tully* about her award winning book, *The Inheritance of Loss* in the line-up are William Dairymple who will unveil his enthusiasm for India's large Mughal emperor with his recently launched book *The Last Mughal*, ex-BBC India correspondent and author Mark Tully who will join other leading journalists from the region including foreign correspondent Christopher Kremmer, author of three books, his latest being *Inhaling the Mahatma*, distinguished biographer Victoria Glendinning who will bring to life her latest biography *Leonard Woolf - a life* and 2005 Pulitzer Prize finalist Suketu Mehta who will share his passion for Bombay with his book *Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found*. Other authors at the festival will be Sir Arthur C. Clarke, London's River Café owner - Rose Gray, Sri Lanka's Romesh Gunasekera and author and actress Madhur Jaffrey.

"The festival will provide local and international visitors with one of the most exciting and powerful programmes the South Asian region has seen - a truly world class event," Southwell explains. The four-day programme filled with writing workshops, panel discussions, topical debates, literary lunches and dinners featuring



Jagath Kumarasinghe

acclaimed chefs, poetry readings, cooking classes, theatre workshops, a children's programme and much more as can be seen in the festival website: www.galleliteraryfestival.com Tickets are available online as well as at the festival box offices in Colombo and Galle.



Christopher Kremmer

The premier festival will focus on celebrating Sri Lankan literature and raise awareness of the great depth and diversity of Sri Lankan authors and their contribution to the English language, and will honour one of Sri Lanka's renowned and international authors, the late Nihal De Silva whose work has assisted in raising the awareness of writing in English by Sri Lankan authors around the world. Among the well-known Sri Lankan writers participating in the event are Yasmine Gooneratne, Carl Muller, Tissa Abeysekera, Elmo Jayawardena, David Blacker and Jagath Kumarasinghe.



David Blacker

The proposed children's programme would feature a selection of fun-filled and informative workshops, debates and essay writing competitions for young people aged 3-16. All workshops are free and held in English. These are predominantly for children of the Southern Province who do not normally have access to such programmes.

The festival is sponsored by: Lunuganga, Amangalla, The Dutch House, The Lighthouse Hotel & Spa, Barefoot Gallery, The Sun House, The Fort Printers, The Fort Gallery, Samakanda, SriLankan Airlines, Cathay Pacific, the British Council, Pyxle Pvt. Ltd., Casa Colombo, AdoptSriLanka, Grant McCann Erickson, Response Marketing Pvt. Ltd., The Favourite Group, The Economist, and the Australian Government.



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