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Entries open for new Rs 25 lakh literary award

JCB Prize for Literature, funded by one of India's leading manufacturer of earthmoving and construction equipment, JCB India Ltd, and administered by the JCB Literature Foundation, is open for entries until May 31. The award provides the winner with a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh and if the winning book is a translation, the translator will be awarded Rs 5 lakh



JCB Prize for Literature is aimed at celebrating and showcasing distinguished works of fiction by Indian writers Rana Dasgupta, Deepa Mehta, Arshia Sattar are among the jury members. (From L-R)

Entries have opened for the inaugural edition of a literary award that breaks down language barriers and recognises the full

cosmopolitan breadth of contemporary Indian literature. The award provides the winner with a cash prize of Rs 25 lakh and if the winning book is a translation, the translator will be awarded Rs 5 lakh. Billed as “*India’s richest literary prize*,” the JCB Prize for Literature is aimed at celebrating and showcasing distinguished works of fiction by Indian writers. The prize, funded by one of India’s leading manufacturer of earthmoving and construction equipment, JCB India Ltd, and administered by the JCB Literature Foundation, is open for entries until May 31. The organisers said that every publisher has entry quotas for works written originally in English, and separately, for works translated into English from any other language.

If the winning book is translated to English, the translator will be awarded Rs 5 lakhs, the organisers said. “*By recognising the full range of India’s literary traditions, the JCB Prize for Literature hopes to encourage future translations (both into English and between Indian languages) and therefore open up a truly Indian literature to readers*,” JCB Literature Foundation said in a statement.

Award-winning novelist and essayist Rana Dasgupta is Literary Director of the prize and is responsible for holding the prize to the highest literary standards. Each year, the Literary Director will appoint a jury, whose job is to read all entries and select a longlist (in September), a shortlist (in October) and then a winner (in November). The jury will consist of distinguished individuals from a variety of fields, who bring to their

deliberations the experience of many different aspects of contemporary life.

“As JCB approaches the important milestone of 40 years of manufacturing in India, there is no better time to launch the JCB Prize for Literature. It’s my hope that, in some small way, this prize will encourage more and more people to read and also be of benefit to writers and publishers in this extraordinary country,” said JCB Chairman Lord Bamford.

This year’s jury consists of award-winning film director Deepa Mehta (Chair); founder of the Murty Classical Library of India, Rohan Murty, Yale University astrophysicist and writer Priyamvada Natarajan, prominent novelist, Vivek Shanbhag, and author and translator, Arshia Sattar. All shortlisted authors win Rs 1 lakh each.

“In a multilingual country like India, where there are many distinct literary traditions, no one can say they know ‘Indian literature’ if they read only books written in their own language. With this prize we hope to stimulate far more translation between Indian languages, and so to give people a far deeper sense of what other people are talking and thinking about in the country,” said Literary Director Rana Dasgupta.