

BOOKS

Four Debutants in 2019 JCB Prize for Literature Longlist

The list comprises four women and six men, all of whom have written political critiques harnessing India's past.



Roshan Ali, Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, Amrita Mahale and Perumal Murugan. Photos: Twitter and publishers' websites



The Wire Staff

BOOKS 42 MINUTES AGO

The ten-novel longlist for the 2019 JCB Prize for literature was announced on Wednesday, September 4. The list comprises four debutants and has four women and six men.

Writing published between August 2018 and July 2019 from 14 states and in six languages was considered by five judges for the preparation of the longlist, a press release by the Prize's organisers said.

The literature prize includes a Rs 25 lakh cash award. The shortlist of five titles will be announced on October 4 and the winner, on November 2.



The novels on the longlists are:

1. Roshan Ali's *Ib's Endless Search for Satisfaction*
2. Manoranjan Byapari's *There's Gunpowder in the Air* (translated from the Bengali by Arunava Sinha)
3. Rajkamal Jha's *The City and the Sea*
4. Amrita Mahale's *Milk Teeth*
5. Sharanya Manivannan's *The Queen of Jasmine Country*
6. Perumal Murugan's *Trial by Silence and Lonely Harvest* (translated from the Tamil by Aniruddhan Vasudevan)
7. Mukta Sathe's *A Patchwork Family*
8. Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar's *My Father's Garden*
9. Madhuri Vijay's *The Far Field*
10. Paul Zacharia's *A Secret History of Compassion*

The novels by Roshan Ali, Amrita Mahale, Mukta Sathe and Madhuri Vijay are debuts.

A panel of five judges selected the novels: filmmaker and environmentalist Pradip Krishen, former Chief Economic Adviser Arvind Subramanian, authors Anjum Hasan, K.R. Meera and Parvati Sharma.

The statement quotes Krishen as pointing out the common strain in all the novels. "These are novels about working-class struggles and upper-class unease, historical evocations and contemporary conflicts, each written in an absolutely distinctive voice," he said, adding that Indian history has seeped into present-day literature like never before.

Also read: Malayalam Writer Benyamin's 'Jasmine Days' Wins JCB Prize for Literature

Several "fine novels," said Krishen were let down by their poor translations.

Author Rana Dasgupta, who is literary director of the prize, said there were many "treasures" in the list.

The 2018 Prize was awarded to *Jasmine Days* by Malayalam writer Benyamin, which had been translated from the Malayalam by Shahnaz Habib.