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**Press Release 18 February 2010**

## **Commonwealth Writers' Prize Opens New Chapter for 12 Authors in South Asia and Europe**

Internationally recognized for propelling authors into the literary spotlight, the shortlist for the regional winners from South Asia and Europe has been unveiled in the race to win the influential 2010 Commonwealth Writers' Prize. Offering an exceptional opportunity for new writers to demonstrate their talent and for authors already on the literary scene to strengthen their reputation – writers across the region - are in pole position to compete with the best authors from Africa, Caribbean and Canada and South East Asia and the Pacific to win the coveted prizes of the Commonwealth's Best Book and Best First Book.

The shortlisted writers for South Asia and Europe Best Book are:

*Solo* by Rana Dasgupta (Britain)

*For Pepper and Christ: A Novel* by Keki Daruwalla (India)

*The Beijing of Possibilities* by Jonathan Tel (Britain)

*Heartland* by Anthony Catwright (Britain)

*Another Gulmohar Tree* by Aamer Hussein (Pakistan)

*The Immortals* by Amit Chaudhuri (India)

The shortlisted writers for South Asia and Europe Best First Book are:

*The Hungry Ghosts* by Anne Berry (Britain)

*Arzee the Dwarf* by Chandrahas Choudhury (India)

*In Other Rooms, Other Wonders* by Daniyal Mueenuddin (Pakistan)

*Among Thieves* by Mez Packer (Britain)

*An Equal Stillness* by Francesca Kay (Britain)

*Tail of the Blue Bird* by Nii Parkes (Britain)

The critically acclaimed Commonwealth Writers' Prize is in its 24<sup>th</sup> year and has a strong track record of discovering new international stars. The winners of Best First Book and Best

Book will stand alongside some of the biggest names in fiction, including Vikram Chandra, who won the Best First Book award in 1996 for his book *Red Earth, Pouring Rain*.

The Prize is presented by the Commonwealth Foundation with support from the Macquarie Group Foundation. The final programme, starting on 7 April in Delhi, India will bring together the finalists from the different regions of the Commonwealth, and the two overall winners will be announced there on 12 April.

Commenting today, The Director of the Commonwealth Foundation, Mark Collins, said:

“The Commonwealth Writers’ Prize is distinct and unique in that the books that win often have strong insight, spirit and voice about the incredible diversity, history and society of the Commonwealth. The Prize aims to reward the best of Commonwealth fiction written in English and in doing so, spots rising talent and creates new literary figures from the Commonwealth. This is the Prize to watch for tomorrow’s best-sellers.”

David Clarke, Chairman of the Macquarie Group Foundation, the main sponsor of the Prize, added:

“The Commonwealth Writers’ Prize is unique in giving a voice to authors who throw light on evolving social realities. The Macquarie Group Foundation is delighted to be part of recognising literary talent from around the world and to help support emerging writers.”

Regional Chair, Muneeza Shamsie highlighted:

“The wealth of talent on the shortlist puts Europe and South Asia region in a strong position to go onto win the overall prize. The judges were overwhelmed by extraordinary range of the submissions from the exquisitely carved miniature of Hussein to the broad sweeping strokes of Dasgupta: the shortlists represent authors who have expanded the multiple dimensions of the form from short stories and historical novels to provincial and transcultural fiction.”

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**For further information about the regional winners and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize please visit :**

<http://www.commonwealthfoundation.com/culturediversity/writersprize/>

**Marcie Shaoul**  
**Communications Manager**  
Commonwealth Foundation  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7747 6582  
E: [m.shaoul@commonwealth.int](mailto:m.shaoul@commonwealth.int)

**General information:**  
**Fareena Chaudhry**  
Commonwealth Foundation  
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7747 6501  
E: [f.chaudhry@commonwealth.int](mailto:f.chaudhry@commonwealth.int)

#### Notes to Editors

1. The Commonwealth Writers' Prize, established in 1987, is organised and funded by the Commonwealth Foundation with the support of the Macquarie Group Foundation. The Commonwealth Foundation is an intergovernmental body working to help civil society organisations promote democracy, development and cultural understanding in Commonwealth countries.
2. The Macquarie Group Foundation is the philanthropic arm of Macquarie Group Limited, a global provider of banking, financial, advisory, investment and fund management services.
3. The 2010 pan-Commonwealth panel of judges which will decide the overall winners is chaired by Hon Justice Nicholas Hasluck AM (Chair of the Commonwealth Writers' Prize), and comprises the four regional chairpersons: Elinor Sisulu (Africa); Antonia MacDonald-Smythe (Caribbean and Canada); Muneeza Shamsie (South Asia and Europe); and Anne Brewster (South East Asia and Pacific), along with the Delhi-based local judge Makarand Paranjape, twice regional chair of the Prize.
4. The £10,000 Best Book Prize in 2009 was awarded to Australian writer Christos Tsiolkas for *The Slap*. The Best First Book Prize of £5,000 went to Pakistani writer Mohammed Hanif for *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. The prizes were announced at the Auckland Writers and Readers Festival in New Zealand. The 2008 Overall winner was Lawrence Hill of Canada for *The Book of Negroes*.