

**PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE**  
**Tuesday 10th January 2012**

## Seven novels make Man Asian Literary Prize's strongest shortlist

LONDON – An unprecedented seven novels have been shortlisted for the 2011 Man Asian Literary Prize, Chair Judge Razia Iqbal announced today.

Speaking at a press conference at Man Group offices in London, Ms. Iqbal revealed that because of the strength of contemporary fiction coming out of Asia, the decision had been made to increase the number of writers on the shortlist from the usual five to seven.

The shortlisted titles are as follows: AUTHOR, Country – *Title* (Publisher)

- JAMIL AHMAD, Pakistan – *The Wandering Falcon* (Penguin India/Hamish Hamilton)
- JAHAVI BARUA, India – *Rebirth* (Penguin India/Penguin Books)
- RAHUL BHATTACHARYA, India - *The Sly Company of People Who Care* (Pan Macmillan/Pan Macmillan India/Picador)
- AMITAV GHOSH, India - *River of Smoke* (John Murray/Penguin India/Hamish Hamilton)
- KYUNG-SOOK SHIN, South Korea – *Please Look After Mom* (Alfred A. Knopf)
- YAN LIANKE, China - *Dream of Ding Village* (Grove Atlantic)
- BANANA YOSHIMOTO, Japan - *The Lake* (Melville House)

90 books were submitted for entry in 2011 and the longlist of 12 books was announced in October last year. Four of the shortlisted novels were originally written in English; the novels from South Korea, China and Japan are all judged in translation.

Speaking of the decision Chair Judge, Razia Iqbal said, “The judges were greatly impressed by the imaginative power of the stories now being written about rapidly changing life in worlds as diverse as the arid borderlands of Pakistan, the crowded cityscape of modern Seoul, and the opium factories of nineteenth century Canton. This power and diversity made it imperative for us to expand the 2011 Man Asian Literary Prize shortlist beyond the usual five books.”

The two other judges for this year's Prize are Pulitzer-prize finalist and author of *The Surrendered*, Chang-rae Lee, and Vikas Swarup, author of *Q&A* which was filmed as the

Oscar-winning *Slumdog Millionaire*. The judges' comments on each book can be found below.

Chair Director of the Man Asian Literary Prize, Prof. David Parker said, "Once again the Man Asian Literary Prize makes a unique offering by bringing the best writing of both South and East Asia into the same frame, allowing us all to glimpse the diverse richness of imagination in play in Asia today."

The winner of the 2011 Man Asian Literary Prize will be announced on Thursday March 15<sup>th</sup> 2012 at a black tie dinner in Hong Kong, the home of the Prize.

The Prize can be followed on Twitter at [@MALPrize](https://twitter.com/MALPrize) and #MALPrize11, as well as on Facebook at [facebook.com/MALPrize](https://facebook.com/MALPrize)

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## THE SHORTLISTED BOOKS

### **Jamil Ahmad - *The Wandering Falcon***

Jamil Ahmad was born in Jalandhar in 1933. As a member of the Civil Service of Pakistan, he served mainly in the Frontier Province and in Balochistan. He was Political Agent in Quetta, Chaghi, Khyber and Malakand. Later, he was commissioner in Dera Ismail Khan and in Swat. He was also chairman of the Tribal Development Corporation. He was posted as minister in Pakistan's embassy in Kabul at a critical time, before and during the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. He now lives in Islamabad, *The Wandering Falcon* is his first novel.

#### **About the book**

Set in the decades before the rise of the Taliban, Jamil Ahmad's stunning debut takes us to the essence of human life in the forbidden areas where the borders of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan meet. Today the 'tribal areas' are often spoken about as a remote region, a hotbed of conspiracies, drone attacks and conflict. In *The Wandering Falcon*, this highly traditional, honour-bound culture is revealed from the inside for the first time.

#### **WHAT THE JUDGES SAID**

*"A stark and loosely connected set of stories set on the frontiers of Pakistan, Iran and Afghanistan, which seem timeless and absorbing; this has the feel of a captivating classic."*

### **Jahnvi Barua - *Rebirth***

Jahnvi Barua is based in Bangalore. She is a medical doctor but has been writing fiction for the past seven years. Her first book, *Next Door*, a collection of short stories, was published by Penguin India in 2008 to wide critical acclaim. Barua's short fiction has been widely anthologized and she also contributes essays and book reviews to various publications. In 2006, the British Council awarded her a Charles Wallace Trust fellowship for Creative Writing.

#### **About the book**

*Rebirth* is the story of Kaberi, a young woman coming to grips with an uncertain marriage. It is also an intimate portrait of the passionate bond between a mother and her unborn child. Moving between Bangalore and Guwahati the novel weaves together Kaberi's inner and outer worlds as she negotiates the treacherous waters of betrayal and loss.

#### **WHAT THE JUDGES SAID**

*"This is highly controlled, finely restrained writing. What appears to be a straightforward portrait of an uncertain marriage reveals itself layer after layer to be a more poignant tale of the redemptive power of love, but also of the power of story telling to make yourself anew."*

### **Rahul Bhattacharya – *The Sly Company of People Who Care***

Rahul Bhattacharya was born in 1979. A cricket journalist since 2000, he is now a contributing editor with *Wisden Asia Cricket* and has been writing for the *Wisden Almanack* since 2003, when he compiled the series overview of India in England, 2002. He also writes for the *Guardian*.

#### **About the book**

A twenty-six-year-old Indian journalist decides to give up his job and travel to a country where he can escape the deadness of his life'. So he arrives in Guyana, a forgotten colonial society of raw, mesmerising beauty. From the beautiful, decaying wooden houses of Georgetown, through coastal sugarcane plantations, to the dark rainforest interior scavenged by diamond-hunters, he is absorbed by the fantastic possibilities of this place where the descendants of the enslaved and the indentured have made a new world.

#### **WHAT THE JUDGES SAID**

*"Part travelogue, part novel, this is both funny and smart: a young Indian cricket journalist travels to Guyana, and finds it and its people beguiling. Bhattacharya's prose style is reminiscent of early Naipaul, and his engagement with his subject is full of humanity."*

### **Amitav Ghosh – *River of Smoke***

Amitav Ghosh was born in Calcutta in 1956 and grew up in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and India. He is the author of several novels including the bestselling *Sea of Poppies* which was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2008. He currently divides his time between Calcutta, Goa and Brooklyn.

#### **About the book**

In September 1838 a storm blows up on the Indian Ocean and the Ibis, a ship carrying a consignment of convicts and indentured laborers from Calcutta to Mauritius, is caught up in the whirlwind. On the grand scale of an historical epic, *River of Smoke* follows its storm-tossed characters to the crowded harbors of China. There, despite efforts of the emperor to stop them, ships from Europe and India exchange their cargoes of opium for boxes of tea, silk, porcelain and silver. Following *Sea of Poppies*, this is the second novel in Ghosh's Ibis trilogy.

#### **WHAT THE JUDGES SAID**

*"This is epic story telling, set against the backdrop of the Opium wars, meticulously researched and important. It not only presents a strong case for hybridity, but also a reminder of an earlier time when the East was ascendant."*

### **Kyung-sook Shin - *Please Look After Mom***

Translated by Chi-Young Kim

Kyung-sook Shin is the author of numerous works of fiction and is one of South Korea's most widely read and acclaimed novelists. She has been honored with the Manhae Literature Prize, the Dong-in Literature Prize, and the Yi Sang Literary Prize, as well as France's Prix de l'Inaperçu. *Please Look After Mom* is her first book to appear in English and will be published in twenty-nine countries. Currently a visiting scholar at Columbia University in New York City, she lives in Seoul.

#### **About the book**

A million-plus-copy best seller in Korea, *Please Look After Mom* is the stunning, deeply moving story of a family's search for their mother, who goes missing one afternoon amid the crowds of the Seoul Station subway.

#### **WHAT THE JUDGES SAID**

*"This is a moving and structurally compelling novel, which examines a single family's history through the story of the matriarch, who mysteriously goes missing from a train station. A disquieting portrait of what can happen when ancient rituals and tradition are ignored in favour of modernity."*

## **Yan Lianke – *Dream of Ding Village***

Translated by Cindy Carter

Yan Lianke was born in 1958 in Henan Province, China. He is the author of many novels and short-story collection, including *Serve the People!*, and has won China's two top literary awards, the Lu Xun for *Nian, yue, ri (The Year, the Month, the Day)*, and the Lao She for *Shouhuo (Pleasure)*.

### **About the book**

Officially censored upon its Chinese publication, *Dream of Ding Village* is Chinese novelist Yan Lianke's most important novel to date. Set in a poor village in Henan province, it is a deeply moving and beautifully written account of a blood-selling scandal in contemporary China.

### **WHAT THE JUDGES SAID**

*"An impressive and searing work, which chronicles the disturbing practice of blood selling using dirty needles in rural China, which results in peasants becoming infected with the AIDS virus; both true story and allegory on the price a country can pay in the pursuit of power, money and real estate."*

## **Banana Yoshimoto – *The Lake***

Translated by Michael Emmerich

Banana Yoshimoto wrote her first novel, *Kitchen*, while working as a waitress at a golf-course restaurant. It sold millions of copies worldwide, and led to a phenomenon dubbed by Western journalists as "Banana-mania." Yoshimoto has gone on to be one of the biggest-selling and most distinguished writers in Japanese history, winning numerous awards for her work. *The Lake* is her thirteenth book of fiction.

### **About the book**

The novel tells the tale of a young woman who moves to Tokyo after the death of her mother, hoping to get over her grief and start a career as a graphic artist. She finds herself spending too much time staring out her window, though ... until she realizes she's gotten used to seeing a young man across the street staring out his window, too. They eventually embark on a hesitant romance, until she learns that he has been the victim of some form of childhood trauma. Visiting two of his friends who live a monastic life beside a beautiful lake, she begins to piece together a series of clues that lead her to suspect his experience may have had something to do with a bizarre religious cult.

### **WHAT THE JUDGES SAID**

*"Both poetic and atmospheric, The Lake is a moving glimpse into the nature of an unconventional relationship; the couple who have a troubled past seek solace and solitude by a lake in the country, where dark secrets are unearthed."*

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## Notes to Editors

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### **About The Man Asian Literary Prize**

The Man Asian Literary Prize was founded in 2007. It is an annual literary award given to the best novel by an Asian writer, either written in English or translated into English, and published in the previous calendar year. The judges choose a longlist of 10 to 15 titles announced in October, followed by a shortlist of 5 to 6 titles announced in January, and a winner is awarded in March. The winning author is awarded USD 30,000 and the translator (if any) USD 5,000.

### **About Man**

Man is a world-leading alternative investment management business. It has expertise in a wide range of liquid investment styles including managed futures, equity, credit and convertibles, emerging markets, global macro and multi-manager, combined with powerful product structuring, distribution and client service capabilities. At 30 September 2011, Man manages USD64.5 billion.

The original business was founded in 1783. Today, Man Group plc is listed on the London Stock Exchange and is a member of the FTSE 100 Index, with a market capitalisation of around USD5.0 billion.

Man is a member of the Dow Jones Sustainability World Index and the FTSE4Good Index. Man also supports many awards, charities and initiatives around the world, including sponsorship of the Man Booker literary prizes and the Man Asian Literary Prize.

Man sponsored literary prizes are the Man Booker Prize, the Man Booker International Prize, the Lost Man Booker Prize and the Man Asian Literary Prize.