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PRESS RELEASE

Kerala's Travel Lit Fest 'Yaanam 2025' to feature top writers, influencers from across world

- **Booker Prize winner Shehan Karunatilaka, Grammy Awardee Prakash Sontakke among speakers for Oct 17-19 event**
- ***Yaanam will be a signature event of Kerala Tourism, says Tourism Minister***

Thiruvananthapuram, Oct 11: An eclectic mix of writers, artists, documentary filmmakers, vloggers, travel enthusiasts, and culinary gurus from India and abroad will congregate in Varkala near here to narrate their inspirational journeys and give insights into their crafts as Kerala is all set to host the inaugural edition of 'Yaanam' from October 17 to 19.

Hailed as India's first travel lit festival, the impressive line-up of 33 speakers at the event, hosted by Kerala Tourism, includes Booker Prize winner Shehan Karunatilaka and Gratiaen Award-winning Sri Lankan author Andrew Fidel Fernando.

The festival, to be held at Ranga Kala Kendram at the Cliff, Varkala, comes close on the heels of various initiatives of Kerala such as Wedding and MICE Tourism Conclave, and Responsible Tourism (RT) Conclave.

"Celebrating Words and Wanderlust" is the central theme of the festival, spotlighting the close connect between literature and travelling since ancient times.

The list of speakers includes Grammy Award-winning musician Prakash Sontakke; Prof. Nathalie Handal, poet, playwright, nonfiction and literary travel writer who is called the 'Contemporary Orpheus'; Benyamin, famous novelist and short story writer, whose bestseller Aadujeevitham (Goat Days) won the Sahitya Akademi Award; and noted journalist and author Pallavi Aiyar. They will be regaling the audience by stringing together their diverse range of perspectives, styles, and quirky experiences for exploring and documenting the world.

Tourism Minister Shri P A Mohamed Riyas said Yaanam is going to be a signature event of Kerala Tourism which has earned international plaudits for its innovative campaigns.

"Significantly, Yaanam is not only a travel literary festival but also a meeting point for a diverse range of creative minds, all of whom bonded in their craze for travelling and exploring places. In particular, it will bring to the fore, Varkala's untapped tourism potential before the world," he added.



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Other prominent figures at the festival will include award-winning Tibetan poet and activist Tenzin Tsundue, journalist and author Sudeep Chakravarti, and celebrated photographer Asha Thadani who was nominated for the Henri Cartier Bresson Award 2015.

Another speaker from Sri Lanka is award-winning author Ciara Mandulee Mendis, whose debut collection of short stories 'The Lanka Box' won the State Literary Award 2023. Her travelogue "Gallivanting: A writer's journey across six countries chasing sunsets, stories, and suspicious amounts of tea" which includes a chapter on India, was recently launched in Colombo.

Also from Sri Lanka is Pramudith D Rupasinghe, whose literary works largely unfold in settings beyond his native country. A winner of the prestigious Golden Aster Prize for Global Literature, his unique approach to storytelling has earned him international recognition and the distinctive moniker of 'The Writer Without Borders'.

Afeedha Sherin (22), a solo traveller from Kerala, will recount her first international trip to Mauritius, which was marked by the rare experience of swimming alongside 12 whales.

Sumaa Tekur is a Bengaluru-based writer and editor, whose book *The Monks Who Laughed When the Bumblebee Stung Me* (2024), recounts her solo travels to 18 countries.

Lending variety to the event will be Chef Sanza Sandile, dubbed as 'a gastronomic smuggler' and the founder of the famed Johannesburg Yeoville Dinner Club, a space for tasting well-known African dishes over discussions on a united and prosperous Africa on a dinner table.

Bringing in a strong spirit of adventure, Piya Bahadur will join the event to recount stories about her all-woman 17,000-km biking expedition across six countries, which she encapsulated in the book 'Road to Mekong'.

Famous travel documentarian and writer duo Priya Ganapathy and Anurag Mallick, food guru Karen Anand, whose 12-book series *Simple Cooking* was nominated for the Gourmand World Cookbook Awards in Paris; and trend-setting travel vlogger and storyteller Kritika Goel, will also be part of the event.

Author, journalist and political commentator Ullekh N P, Binoo K John and culture writer Faizal Khan, all hailing from Kerala but based in Delhi, will share their experience and perspectives.

Another interesting speaker is Madhu Raghavendra, a poet, performance artist, and curator, whose poems have been set to music in USA, Finland and the Netherlands.



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Envisioned and conceptualized by author and curator Sabin Iqbal, 'Yaanam 2025' has been programmed by author Nirmala Govindarajan, whose works stand out for intense travel experiences.

Apart from discussions and interactions, the festival will feature curated trails that highlight the attractions of Varkala and engaging workshops on writing, photography and wellness.

Ends

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