



**Press Release**  
**7 August 2018**

## **World's Leading Literary Festival – the George Town Literary Festival returns with 'The State of Freedom' this 22 – 25 November in Penang, Malaysia**

George Town, Penang – Crowned the leading literary festival in the world in 2018, the George Town Literary Festival (GTLF) returns this November 22 – 25 with “The State of Freedom”. GTLF is funded by the State Government of Penang and is produced by Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB)

The announcement was made at a press conference chaired by Yeoh Soon Hin, the Penang State Exco for Tourism Development, Heritage, Culture and Arts. Joining him was Ashwin Gunasekeran, CEO of PCEB and GTLF Festival Director Bernice Chauly.

Celebrating its eighth edition this year, the festival attracted more than 4,500 attendees in 2017 over the span of three days, making the producers of GTLF, PCEB, seeing it fit to expand this year's festival to four days. Joining Festival Director Bernice Chauly in the curatorial team are co-curators Gareth Richards, Melizarani T. Selva and Pang Khee Teik.

This year's theme, 'The State of Freedom' hits very close to home and is made more significant after Malaysia's recent 14<sup>th</sup> General Election on May 9. Besides recognising the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the theme also shines the light on Penang being a home to the GTLF, first spearheaded by former Chief Minister, Lim Guan Eng.

“The State of Freedom is significant as 2018 marks many milestones in contemporary history. Seventy years ago in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations in the recognition of fundamental human rights for all. That very same year, the Batang Kali massacre was committed on Malayan soil. A hundred years ago in 1918, women got to vote in the UK, after years of struggle and strife by the suffragette movement, and in 1968, Dr Martin Luther King was assassinated, thrusting the civil rights movement in America towards an ugly head. Ten years ago, Kevin Rudd said sorry to the aboriginal peoples of Australia. And on May 9 this year, Malaysia peacefully and democratically exercised its right as a nation,” said Festival Director, Bernice Chauly.

“The George Town Literary Festival 2018 celebrates our most diverse voices in world literature and the many states of freedoms we continue to live, write and struggle in,” she added.

Festival Producer



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Additionally, GTLF is proud to introduce the first ever Malaysia National Poetry Slam. The slam will be an annual spoken word poetry competition which focuses on poems written and performed in English and Bahasa Malaysia, where 12 Malaysian poets, aged 15 years and above, will compete to become the National Slam Champion.

“The George Town Literary Festival is the only literary festival in the country that is funded by and supported by a state government. This world-class festival, which encourages discourse from the public in the spirit of freedom of expression, is only possible in Penang because of the Penang State Government’s commitment to champion the arts, culture and community engagement,” said Yeoh Soon Hin, the Penang State Exco for Tourism Development, Heritage, Culture and Arts at the press conference this afternoon.

In March this year, GTLF was awarded The International Excellence Awards 2018 for the Literary Festival at The London Book Fair. “In a strong field, George Town Literary Festival stands out as a vibrant, diverse and brave festival that engages with a wide community of voices, speaking to the world from a complex region,” said the judges of the International Excellence Awards 2018. GTLF is the first literary festival in Southeast Asia to be conferred this award.

GTLF 2018 takes place over four days from 22 – 25 November, and will feature over 80 writers, poets, thinkers and performers from more than 20 countries.

The festival continues to be free and open to the public, and will feature panel discussions and a variety of activities in venues situated within the UNESCO George Town World Heritage Site.

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**For more information, contact Toh Mei Chern at [meichern@pceb.my](mailto:meichern@pceb.my) or call +604-2616161.**

**To download images from the press conference, click here: <https://bit.ly/2IK9qHJ>**

**GTLF updates can be obtained at:**

**Website: [www.georgetownlitfest.com](http://www.georgetownlitfest.com)**

**Facebook: [@georgetownlitfest](https://www.facebook.com/georgetownlitfest)**

**Email: [info@georgetownlitfest.com](mailto:info@georgetownlitfest.com)**

**Media Centre: <http://www.georgetownlitfest.com/press-centre/>**

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