



Press Release

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George Town Literary Festival 2018 Celebrates Its Largest Edition Yet with 100 Participants from 25 Countries

George Town, Penang – The George Town Literary Festival 2018 was officiated this evening at Cheah Kongsi by the Chief Minister of Penang, YAB Chow Kon Yeow and YB Yeoh Soon Hin, Penang State Exco for Tourism Development, Heritage, Arts & Culture.

Crowned the leading literary festival in the world in 2018, the George Town Literary Festival (GTLF) takes place this week from November 22 – 25 with the theme “The State of Freedom”. GTLF is funded by the State Government of Penang and is produced by Penang Convention & Exhibition Bureau (PCEB). This year, the festival has a lineup of 100 participants from 25 countries. The festival main site is in Bangunan UAB on Gat Lebuh Cina, with concurrent events taking place in @CAT (Wisma Yeap Chor Ee), Loft 29, Gayo Coffee, Hikayat and The Canteen at ChinaHouse.

“This year we delve into the theme, ‘The State of Freedom’, which resonates especially with us Malaysians, as we achieved the impossible by removing a corrupt government in the true spirit of democracy - and without a single drop of blood. without a single drop of blood. The State of Freedom is also 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,” said Chauli in her opening address.

This year’s keynote address was given by the eminent Dato’ Anwar Fazal, a prolific Penang-based writer and advocate for human rights, interfaith relations and peace. The Opening Performance featured a Penang cultural band, Culture Shot, who performed local folk songs in the Malay language, Hokkien and English. Out of the 100 writers, GTLF 2018 features 65 Malaysian and Malaysian-born writers, performers, artists and thinkers, and has a concerted focus on emerging writers

The festival is also organising the inaugural Malaysia National Poetry Slam supported by the British High Commission. The Malaysia National Poetry Slam will take place on Nov 24 at Loft 29 from 7.30pm to 10.30pm. The champion of the slam will be able to represent Malaysia in international poetry slams.

The GTLF was initiated in 2011 as a literary festival celebrating world literature by the former Chief Minister of Penang, Lim Guan Eng. With a line-up for five writers in 2011, the festival has grown over the past eight years and has put Penang in the world map as the home of one of the best literary festivals in the world.



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.

"We have had some of the brightest minds and most articulate and passionate voices in the literary and journalistic worlds come together to engage in topics and themes that are crucial to the world we live in. 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 state government's commitment to championing the arts, culture and community engagement," said Chow in his officiating speech.

In his welcoming speech, Yeoh said, "As a Penangite, I take pride in the fact that the George Town Literary Festival was conferred the International Excellence Awards 2018 for Literary Festival, and remains the only literary festival in the country funded by a state government. This festival has always championed freedom of speech and freedom of expression, in line with the spirit of Penang. It is only fitting that the George Town Literary Festival 2018 is themed The State of Freedom, especially this year when Malaysia spoke clearly on May 9."

GTLF has been fortunate to have been funded by the State Government of Penang for the past eight years, and to be supported by state agencies such as Penang Global Tourism and Penang Institute; as well as embassies and cultural centres such as the British High Commission, The Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the Embassy of France, the Embassy of the Kingdom of Belgium, the High Commission of Canada, the Goethe Institute, Japan Foundation Kuala Lumpur, the British Council, Creative Scotland, Writers South Australia, Icelandic Literature Centre and many more.

George Town Literary Festival is free and open to the public.

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For more media inquiries and interviews, contact Yasmin Bathamanathan at yasmin@pceb.my or call +604-2616161.

GTLF updates can be obtained at:

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