

PSHA's speech at 2008 Man Asian Literary Prize Presentation Ceremony (English only)

Following is the speech delivered by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Carrie Yau, at the 2008 Man Asian Literary Prize Presentation Ceremony today (November 13):

Honourable Judges, Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It is my pleasure to join you at the 2008 Man Asian Literary Prize Presentation Ceremony.

The Man Asian Literary Prize, now in its second year, aims to recognise the best of new Asian literature and to bring it to the attention of the world literary community. Despite its short history, the Prize has, through the annual selection of an outstanding "Asian novel unpublished in English" raised the awareness of Asia as a source of great writings and its developing role in world literature. It has also brought together talented writers from across Asia to exchange their writing experience and be inspired by one another's literary creativity.

Hong Kong is honoured to be involved in this meaningful new project. Throughout our history we have been a place where people from all parts of Asia came to meet each other and the rest of the world. This role in trade, business and finance is well-recognised, but Hong Kong is also a regional centre for journalism, media and education, arts and culture — all industries of creativity and ideas.

The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, same as the Award Organiser, is committed to the promotion of creativity. In his 2008-09 Policy Address, the Chief Executive has announced his plan to set up a dedicated Creative Industry Office which will coordinate the work of different government departments in boosting the development of creative industries in Hong Kong. The SAR Government also attaches great importance to the grooming of talents with proficiency in the English language. English has always been a core subject for students at all levels. Indeed, English proficiency is one of the competitive edges of Hong Kong that underpin our past and future success. Recently, a colleague from the Leisure and Culture Services Department Mr Arthur Leung has beaten more than one thousand other contestants from around the world and won the third prize in the Edwin Morgan International

Poetry Competition 2008 held in the United Kingdom. This is but one example showing the high standards of our creative writers in Hong Kong.

To further develop Hong Kong as the hub of culture in Asia, the SAR Government has recently set up an Authority to take forward the West Kowloon Cultural District Project. I have just come back from a trip to promote the HK\$21 billion project. Occupying a prime site of forty hectares on the harbour front, the West Kowloon Cultural District development is envisaged as a new cultural icon for Hong Kong, comprising fifteen state-of-the-art performance venues and a new, forward-looking museum named M Plus, which will focus on visual culture in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The development will serve as the cradle for a diversity of creative performances, productions, exhibitions and literary works. When I was in Hungary, I was invited to a dance show. This dance was based on Shakespeare's "Measure for Measure". This is indeed most telling – literature is the pillar of all forms of arts. Apart from plays and drama, other performances such as musicals, dances, operas are all based on good stories from talented writers.

The introduction of the Man Asian Literary Prize in Hong Kong is like adding a jewel to the crown. It provides an ideal platform for identifying and nurturing talents in creative writing that Hong Kong needs, especially in the promotion of opera, theatrical play, etc to tie in with the development of the West Kowloon Cultural District.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Award Organiser, the Hong Kong International Literary Festival Limited; Members of the Administrative Committee of the Prize, including the University of Hong Kong and the Chinese University of Hong Kong; and the Sponsor, the Man Group plc, for their laudable efforts in staging this year's awards. My thanks also go to our three distinguished judges, the Right Honourable Adrienne Clarkson, Mr Nicholas Jose and Mr Pankaj Mishra who have travelled to Hong Kong from three of the four corners of the earth to lend their expertise in selecting the shortlisted works and the winner. Special thanks also go to my friend Mr Peter Gordon as a great organizer. He and his team have greatly contributed to such a wonderful gathering for us all tonight.

Last but not least, I would like to warmly congratulate the prize winner of this year and all the shortlisted authors on their great works. I also look forward with much interest to reading their award-winning novels in the near future.

Thank you.

Ends/Thursday, November 13, 2008