

Speech by PSHA at 2009 Man Asian Literary Prize Dinner (English only)

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Following is the speech by the Permanent Secretary for Home Affairs, Mrs Carrie Yau, at the 2009 Man Asian Literary Prize Dinner (November 16):

Mr Rainsford, Chairman Parker, Board of Directors of Man Asian Literary Prize, Judges, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Good evening. It gives me great pleasure to join you all at this presentation ceremony of the 2009 Man Asian Literary Prize.

Initiated by the Hong Kong International Literary Festival in 2007, the Man Asian Literary Prize has since become a premier annual literary event based and organized in Hong Kong. Now in its third year, the Man Asian Literary Prize has successfully reinforced Hong Kong's position as a cultural hub for hosting literary events of international significance and world-recognized standard. The shortlist of works for the Prize this year was just announced in mid October at the Frankfurt Book Fair, the largest book fair in the world. Information panels and videos were displayed in the Hong Kong SAR Pavilion to introduce the Prize and its international judging panel, as well as the longlisted authors and their works. The participation in the Frankfurt Book Fair proved to be a fruitful venture that helped bring this leading literary award in Asia onto the world stage. And we look forward to strengthening our close ties with the Man Prize in the promotion of literary arts in the region in the years to come.

Our Hong Kong Public Libraries devote a considerable amount of resources to supporting and promoting literary studies and researches by providing a rich and comprehensive collection in the Hong Kong Literature Room in the Hong Kong Central Library. Next to this Literature Room, we have also recently set up a Hong Kong Oral History Special Collection in collaboration with nine local tertiary institutes as our founding partners. The Collection, covering oral history materials in different disciplines that are related to Hong Kong studies, aims to enhance the appreciation of the value of oral history in preserving local culture and heritage, and to promote the use of oral history records for Hong Kong studies.

One of the most distinctive issues about Asian Literature is the need to search for an identity that relates to the local history and cultural traditions. The strong sense of

local identity has emerged and found expression in a lot of literary works of Hong Kong writers who are nurtured with traditional Chinese heritage and yet influenced by the western cultural values.

Similarly, we are not surprised to find that the five short-listed entries of the Man Asian Literary Prize this year have incarnated both the rich historical past and the unique modernity of Asian cultures. The five short-listed authors come from different parts of the world, each with a unique educational, cultural and literary background that distinguishes themselves as well as their very brilliant literary pieces. The selection process must be as challenging as it was fascinating. We owe our gratitude to the distinguished panel of international judges. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers of the Prize;; the Advisory Council and the Board of Directors of the Prize; and the Sponsor, Man Group plc, for their zealous and collaborative efforts to bring us this spectacular literary award again this year. And of course, my special thanks go to Mr Peter Gordon, who with his vision and commitment has been the most devout pioneer of this wonderful endeavour.

Last but not the least, I would like to warmly congratulate all the shortlisted authors and the Prize winner of this year on their great works. I look forward to reading their many more great works in future which will surely grace the sky of Asian literature.

Thank you.

Ends/Monday, November 16, 2009

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