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PRESS RELEASE



#Word - The Cooler Lumpur Festival

Celebrating words in all forms in Malaysia for the first time, #Word will also host the Southeast Asian segment of the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference from 21-23 June 2013 at MAP @ Publika.

Supported by the British Council, Borders Malaysia, the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, Creative Scotland, the City of Edinburgh Council and Event Scotland

Kuala Lumpur, 19 April 2013 – June will mark the inaugural Cooler Lumpur Festival, Kuala Lumpur's annual multi-disciplinary celebration of culture. This year, The Cooler Lumpur Festival presents #Word, Malaysia's first - and only - celebration of words in all forms.

#Word aims to engage the producers and purveyors of words - be they written, spoken, or performed - and connect them with the public at large.

#Word will include a lecture series, panel discussions, creative writing workshops, readings, art exhibitions, children's activities, and book markets. It will cover a wide range of topics from literature to journalism, from film to poetry, and from song writing to social media.

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In another first, #Word will play host to the only Southeast Asian segment of the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference (EWWC), the world's largest travelling conference on the state of literature, with three special panels covering the topics of "Censorship Today", "Should Literature Be Political?" and "A National Literature" - that aim to address critical questions affecting both our literature and our society.

Local and international featured writers and panellists at the festival include:

- award-winning author of teenage novels Nicola Morgan
- Novelist Benjamin Markovits
- Professor of journalism Janet Steele
- Myanmarese surgeon, writer, and human rights activist Dr Ma Thida
- Poet, novelist and broadcast journalist from Quezon City Philippines Lourde de Veyra
- Prolific writer and activist Marina Mahathir
- Writer, photographer, filmmaker, actor Bernice Chauly
- Prominent Malaysian journalist and writer Rehman Rashid
- Writer, publisher and independent filmmaker Amir Muhammad
- Non-Malay writers who write in Malay Uthaya Shankar and Gina Yap

"We realised that it is absolutely crucial for a city like Kuala Lumpur to take a minute and celebrate both the written and the spoken word. That the conversations we have and the connections we make when we come together in these ways are so important to ensure our further growth and development as a cultured and thoughtful society," says Cooler Lumpur Festival Director Umapagan Ampikaipakan.

He added that "#Word is committed to raising the level of discourse and engagement in the country.

"We have ambitions of putting Kuala Lumpur on the world map as a place where ideas come to thrive.

"We hope that #Word will be yet another creative space that Malaysians will be proud to call their own," he said.

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Nick Barley, Edinburgh International Book Festival Director said "We believe that writers have a role to play in stimulating our imaginative health and thereby engendering mutual respect amongst individuals and nations.

"The Edinburgh World Writers' Conference represents an opportunity for all of us to rethink how writers, and their writing, can play a part in understanding and improving our world.

"Together the Book Festival and the British Council will make this Conference a genuinely worldwide discussion, and we look forward to the debate which will continue in Kuala Lumpur at #Word," said Barley.

British Council Malaysia Arts Manager Grey Yeoh said "We are incredibly proud to be hosting the South East Asian leg of the EWWC here in Kuala Lumpur, and to be partnering with the good people at the Cooler Lumpur Festival.

"The British Council has had a history of working in literature and promoting the craft of word over the years, through a number of projects like Manga Shakespeare, Animating Literature, Wayang Kata series, City of Stories and more recently the International 24 Hour Book, the Charles Dickens Bicentenary celebrations, the George Town Literature Festival and spoken word artist Inua Ellams' appearance at Urbanscapes 2013.

"We want to continue to contribute to the growth of the community here, and hope that this festival will leave a permanent mark on the literature scene in Malaysia," he said.

The three day event is curated by PopDigital, the people who bring you PopTeeVee, Poskod.my, #BetterCities and Uma and Joe at the Movies.

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It is also working with Radioshack, MOCAFest, Uma and Joe at the Movies, Filmmakers Anonymous, Interpr8 Art Space, Spoken Word events by Poetry Café KL, The Last Polka, The Bee, Fixi and Fixi Novo by Amir Muhammad, BFM: The Business Station, Poskod.my, ZI Publications, Embassy of the United States, New Village: a Malaysian quarterly zine of poetry and prose, Readings curated by Sharon Bakar and Paradiso Concept Lounge for exciting content and activities.

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For media enquiries, please contact:

EeLyn Tan

Communications Officer

British Council Malaysia

Email: eelyn.tan@britishcouncil.org.my

T: +603 2723 7956

Leong Yin Peng, Executive Producer

The Cooler Lumpur Festival

Email: yinpeng@popdigital.my

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Notes to the Editor:

About The Cooler Lumpur Festival

The Cooler Lumpur Festival is a multidisciplinary festival curated by PopDigital. The Kuala Lumpur-centric festival will adopt specific themes each year with the aim to expand the city's cultural horizons, build stronger communities and cultivate the creativity and imagination of people.

PopDigital is a creative media shop specialising in media and technology. It has a diverse portfolio of projects, each with specific aims and objectives, including #BetterCities, which focuses on community-based projects to improve urban living; Poskod.my, an online magazine about city, community, and culture in the Klang Valley; PopTeeVee, a web TV network with the primary objective to help create a democratic media space; Uma and Joe at the movies, a website dedicated to giving the audience everything they've ever wanted from an online show about movies; and The Greatest Hits.

PopDigital also conceptualises and produces podcasts, videos, websites and digital campaigns to help engage corporate clients with reach their intended audience. PopDigital has worked with organisations such as PEMANDU, BMW, Samsung, Unilever, and Konrad Adenauer Foundation on various websites and digital campaigns.

About The Edinburgh World Writers Conference

Presented by the Edinburgh International Book Festival and the British Council, the Edinburgh World Writers' Conference is a unique series of events that are bringing writers together around the world to create an historic picture of the role of literature today.

The conversation began in August 2012 at the Edinburgh International Book Festival where 50 world renowned writers joined members of the public every afternoon of 17-21 August 2012 to discuss the five topics that almost brought writers to blows during the infamous Writers' Conference of 1962.

Following the events in Edinburgh, the world's first UNESCO City of Literature, the World Writers' Conference visits Berlin, Cape Town, Toronto, Krasnoyarsk, Cairo, Jaipur, Izmir, Beijing, Brussels, Port of Spain (Trinidad), St Malo, Lisbon, Kuala Lumpur and Melbourne, giving writers in different countries the chance to add their voice to the growing debate about literature and its relationship to contemporary life.

The conversation will be ongoing throughout 2012-13, with regular live streaming of events worldwide, videos and blogs.

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About British Council Malaysia

The British Council creates international opportunities for the people of the UK and other countries and builds trust between them worldwide. It is a Royal Charter charity, established as the UK's international organisation for educational opportunities and cultural relations.

Its 7,000 staff in over 100 countries work with thousands of professionals and policy makers and millions of young people every year through English, arts, education and society programmes.

The Council earn over 75% of its annual turnover of nearly £700 million from services which customers pay for, education and development contracts and from partnerships. A UK Government grant provides for the remaining 25%. The Council match every £1 of core public funding with over £3 earned in pursuit of our charitable purpose.

The British Council literature team promotes UK writers, poets and publishers to communities and audiences around the world, developing innovative, high-quality events and collaborations that link writers, publishers and cultural institutions. Recent projects include a Writers' Salon in Moscow; a global celebration of the bicentenary of Charles Dickens including a seminar in Berlin; the Erbil Literature Festival, the first international literature festival ever to be held in Iraq; a writers' tour of Turkey; and a global partnership with Hay Festival.

British Council Malaysia is a branch (995232-A) of the British Council, registered as a charity in England and Wales (209131) and Scotland (SC037733).

For more information, please visit: www.britishcouncil.org.my. You can also keep in touch with the British Council through <http://twitter.com/britishcouncil> and <http://blog.britishcouncil.org/>.

About Borders Malaysia

Borders in Malaysia is operated by Berjaya Books Sdn. Bhd. and is now wholly owned by Berjaya Corporation. Borders Malaysia goes beyond offering quality books, with educational and entertainment items. The first Borders Malaysia store opened its doors for business in 2005 at Berjaya Times Square, Kuala Lumpur. Today, there are seven Borders Malaysia stores altogether. The main stores are located at The Curve, Mutiara Damansara; The Gardens, Mid Valley City; Tropicana City Mall, Petaling Jaya; Bangsar Village II, Bangsar and Queensbay Mall, Penang. There are also Borders Express stores, which cater to the specific needs of niche customers; there are two currently, located at Berjaya Times Square, Bangsar Village II and 1Mont Kiara.

With a selection of almost 200,000 book and magazine titles, the urban bookstore chain believes in developing the culture of reading and aims to promote English literacy. To achieve this it looks to making reading and learning fun and exploratory. Another key characteristic of Borders is the personal service and the warm, reader-friendly ambience.

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