

For immediate release

THREE SINGAPORE WRITERS TO RECEIVE S.E.A. WRITE AWARD IN BANGKOK
Prestigious award for 2019-2021 winners in first physical ceremony since 2019

[SINGAPORE, 3 August 2023] – Three writers from Singapore – Chua Chee Lay, Nadiputra and Simon Tay – will receive the S.E.A. Write Award in an awards ceremony in Bangkok on 10 August, the first physical ceremony since 2019. The S.E.A. Write is the most prestigious award given to writers from the ASEAN countries.

Chinese poet, academic and educator Dr Chua Chee Lay is the latest writer from Singapore who was conferred the award in 2021. He will join the 2019 winner Singapore Literature Prize-winning author Simon Tay, and 2020 winner Malay theatre doyen Almahdi Al-Haj Ibrahim, better known as Nadiputra, in attending the awards ceremony at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in Bangkok, Thailand. Each awardee will receive an award honorarium and a S.E.A. Write Recognition Plaque. The ceremony was last held in 2019, and delayed for several years due to the pandemic and travel restrictions in Thailand.

Says Dr Chua on receiving the award: "Writing has been my way of seeing others, of seeing the world, and, the most special moments, of seeing myself. Literature often lets us see the forest when life would have us focused on the trees. I'm grateful I have been able to share the snapshots which represent the beautiful landscape that is my world to an audience, and even more so that my work in this regard has been recognised by the S.E.A. Write Award Committee."

He sees his mission to pass on Singapore Chinese literature to the next generation, adding: "As a student from the last generation of the Chinese-educated in Singapore, Chinese language and culture have long been at the core of my heart. With the opportunities given to me to develop my skills in digital technology, I have made it my life's mission to build a digital bridge between culture and technology, so as to pass on and promote Chinese literature to the next generation."

Recipients of the S.E.A. Write Awards are selected by their peers in each of the ASEAN countries. The award may be given for a specific work by an author or for lifetime achievement.

Both Simon Tay and Nadiputra took part in an online S.E.A. Write event in 2021 to read their works, together with the other winners from ASEAN.

Past Singapore winners include Arthur Yap, Catherine Lim, 谢裕民 (Chia Joo Ming), Edwin Thumboo, Haresh Sharma, Ho Minfong, Isa Kamari, J.M. Sali, K.T.M. Iqbal, Ovidia Yu, Peter Augustine Goh, Rex Shelley, Suratman Markasan, Suchen Christine Lim, 张曦娜 (Teoh Hee La), 黄孟文 (Wong Meng Voon), and 英培安 (Yeng Pway Ngon).

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Annex A: 2019–2021 S.E.A. Write Award Winners

Annex B: List of Former S.E.A. Write Award Winners

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Annex A: 2019–2021 S.E.A. Write Award Winners

Simon Tay (2019 winner)



Simon Tay is a prize-winning author of fiction and poetry. His 2010 novel *City of Small Blessings* was awarded the Singapore Literature Prize. He recently published a collection of short stories titled *Middle and First*.

He is also a public intellectual as well as an advisor to major corporations and policy-makers. Based in Singapore, he is Chairman of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, the country's oldest think tank that has been ranked as the best independent think tank in Asia.

He is concurrently a tenured Associate Professor, teaching international law at the National University of Singapore Faculty of Law and has also taught at Harvard Law School, the Fletcher School and Yale University.

Nadiputra (2020 winner)

Almahdi Al-Haj Ibrahim, better known as Nadiputra, is a playwright, actor, director, producer. Nadiputra is considered by many in Singapore's Malay Community to be the country's reigning patriarch of Malay theatre. He has been involved in theatre for more than five decades, having written more than 300 plays for stage, radio and television.

Nadiputra has received numerous awards for his plays, including the Cultural Medallion in 1986 and the prestigious literary award, the Aungmye Thawgyi Award in 2013.

Nadiputra is described as a warm, jovial and humorous yet philosophical individual. He is a prolific writer with hundreds of stage, television and radio drama scripts to his name. Nadiputra believes that “reading generates new ideas while interacting with as many people as possible makes a person come to terms with realities—and this is essential in scriptwriting”.

Chua Chee Lay (2021 winner)



Dr Chua Chee Lay is a veteran scholar of language, culture and educational technology, having spent 16 years teaching and researching at various institutions, including the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University.

Dr Chua's modern poems are both versatile in style and full of humanistic spirit. His poems are emblematic of the spirit of the established generation of Singapore writers – their innovative confidence balanced with their dedication to traditional culture. In his writing, he pours his innermost thoughts and feelings onto paper, all while reflecting deeply on life and its many subtle beauties.

To date, he has published over 60 papers on language, culture, education and digital technology, hundreds of literary works (poems, essays, flash fiction, etc) and has edited more than 30 books, including the English and Chinese editions of *Keeping My Mandarin Alive: Lee Kuan Yew's Language Learning Experience*.

Dr Chua was appointed as the Singaporean writer-in-residence in France for the 30th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Singapore and France. He is also the first Singaporean academic to serve as Dean of the Faculty of Art and Design, Head of the Chinese Department, Associate Professor, and Director of the Centre for Creative



Teaching and Learning at Southern University, Malaysia. He is devoting his efforts to promoting Chinese culture and the digitisation of Chinese literature.



Singapore Book Council

Building Our Imagine-nation

Annex B: List of Former S.E.A. Write Award Winners

- 1979 Edwin Thumboo
- 1980 *Masuri bin Sulikun
- 1981 黄孟文 (Wong Meng Voon)
- 1982 Ma Ilankannan (M Balakrishnan)
- 1983 *Arthur Yap
- 1984 王润华 (Wong Yoon Wah)
- 1985 *Noor S.I. (Ismail Bin Haji Omar)
- 1986 *Paranan (C. Veloo)
- 1987 Lee Tzu Pheng
- 1988 蔡文玄 (Chua Boon Hean) (Pen name: 柳北岸 Leou Pei Ann)
- 1989 Suratman Markasan
- 1990 Rama Kannabiran
- 1991 *Gopal Baratham
- 1992 张荣日 (Cheong Weng Yat)
- 1993 Muhammad Ariff Ahmad
- 1994 *Naa Govindasamy
- 1995 刘宝珍 (Lew Poo Chan) (淡莹 Pen name: Dan Ying)
- 1996 Ho Minfong
- 1997 Elangovan
- 1998 *Abdul Ghani Hamid
- 1999 Catherine Lim
- 2000 张曦娜 (Teoh Hee La)
- 2001 K.T.M. Iqbal (Mohamed Iqbal)
- 2002 Mohamed Latiff bin Mohamed
- 2003 Philip Jeyaretnam
- 2004 孙爱玲 (Soon Ai Ling)



Singapore Book Council

Building Our Imagine-nation

2005 P. Krishnan

2006 Isa Kamari

2007 *Rex Shelley

2008 Stella Kon

2009 谢惠平 (Chia Hwee Pheng) (希尼尔 Pen name: Xi Ni Er)

2010 Johar Buang

2011 Robert Yeo

2012 Suchen Christine Lim

2013 *英培安 (Yeng Pway Ngon)

2014 Haresh Sharma

2015 J.M. Sali

2016 Ovidia Yu

2017 谢裕民 (Chia Joo Ming)

2018 Goh Mey Teck (Pen name: Peter Augustine Goh)

*deceased

Annex C: About Singapore Book Council

The Singapore Book Council (SBC) is an independent charity with IPC status. Established in 1968 to support Singapore authors and literature, SBC aims to Build Our Imagine-nation by developing creativity, imagination, original thought and empathy through writing, translation, reading, illustration and storytelling. We are committed to developing the literary arts sector through our festivals, training workshops and courses, as well as book awards to recognise excellence. Because it all starts with a story.

Vision: International recognition for quality, diverse Singapore literature.

Mission: To develop, support and advocate a multicultural literary arts sector.

SBC is supported by the National Arts Council of Singapore under the Major Company Scheme for the period from 2022 to 2025. For more information, please visit www.bookcouncil.sg.

Annex D: About the S.E.A. Write Award

Since 1979, the S.E.A. Write Award, or the Southeast Asian Writers Award, has been presented annually to poets and writers in Southeast Asia.

The awards are given to a writer from a country that is part of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), though not all countries in ASEAN have been represented every year. The award is given either for a specific work by an author or for lifetime achievement. The winners are chosen by their peers in each country.

The ten countries which comprise the ASEAN region are Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The S.E.A. Write Award's objectives are:

- i) To recognise the creativity of ASEAN writers;
- ii) To raise awareness of the richness of each ASEAN's country's literary scene;
- iii) To honour the talents of creative writers in ASEAN;
- iv) To bring together the many talents of ASEAN writers.