

*For immediate release*

**SIMON TAY AND NADIPUTRA CHOSEN AS 2019 and 2020 S.E.A. WRITE WINNERS  
RESPECTIVELY**

[SINGAPORE, 7 Oct 2021] – Public intellectual and 2010 Singapore Literature Prize winner Simon Tay and Malay theatre doyen Almahdi Al-Haj Ibrahim, known as Nadiputra, have been selected to receive the S.E.A. Write Award, a prestigious award presented to writers from ASEAN countries. The two winners— Simon Tay (2019) and Nadiputra (2020)—will be presented with their awards together at a ceremony in 2022 .

**2021's Ceremony Postponed due to pandemic**

The S.E.A. Write Award was established in 1979 to recognise and honour literary excellence in the ASEAN region. Based in Bangkok, the awards have usually been presented annually since 1979 to leading poets and writers in the 10 ASEAN countries which will choose their own winners.

2021's awards ceremony was initially planned to be held at the end of the year, but Ms Tipsuda Chaichana, who is the assistant to the Secretariat of The S.E.A. Write Award Organising Committee, informed Singapore's winners in an email that "due to the resurgence of COVID-19 in late April and the ongoing concern for the pandemic, it is not possible for us to organize the SEA WRITE Award Presentation Ceremony late this year as earlier planned." The organising committee shared that it was hoping to arrange the awards ceremony in early or mid-2022.

The award presentation ceremony was previously put on hold from 2016 to 2018 due to the passing of the late King Bhumibhol Adulayadej in 2016. It was restored after the subsequent coronation of His Majesty King Maha Vajiralongkorn in May 2019.

Simon Tay and Nadiputra will join a long illustrious list of writers that include Arthur Yap, Catherine Lim, Edwin Thumboo, Haresh Sharma, Ho Minfong, Isa Kamari, J.M. Sali, K.T.M. Iqbal, 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).

Both writers Simon Tay and Nadiputra were selected for their literary excellence and contributions to Singapore literature. The award winners are also known for their contributions in other fields.

### **2019 Winner: Simon Tay**

Simon Tay is the chairman of the Singapore Institute of International Affairs, a nonprofit think tank that delivers policy analysis in international affairs and issues driving environmental sustainability. He has held this position since 1999, as well as a number of public appointments including a Nominated Member of Parliament. His novel *City of Small Blessings*, known for its themes of alienation and identity, won the 2010 Singapore Literature Prize.

### **2020 Winner: Nadiputra**

Cultural Medallion winner Nadiputra is one of Singapore Malay theatre's pioneers, and he has written more than 300 works across the mediums of radio, stage and television. Nadiputra contributed many scripts for Malay television as a fulltime scriptwriter with the Singapore Broadcasting Corporation in the 80s and 90s. During this period, he also wrote many critically acclaimed plays and was the president of Malay performing arts group *Sriwana*.

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## **ANNEX I: 2019–2020 S.E.A. Write Award Winners Information**

## **ANNEX II: List of Former S.E.A. Write Award Winners**



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## 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. We focus on creative writing, translation, illustration, storytelling and reading. 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 2019 to 2022. For more information, please visit [www.bookcouncil.sg](http://www.bookcouncil.sg).

### **About the S.E.A. Write Award**

The S.E.A. Write Award was established in 1979 to encourage ASEAN countries to recognise creative literary talents in the region. The annual Awards Presentation and Gala Dinner has always been presided over by a member of the Thai Royal Family. 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 each year.

The 10 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 Selection Committee is chaired by esteemed poet and scholar 王润华教授 (Professor Wong Woon Wah), who is also a former winner.

### Award Objectives

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.

**ANNEX I: 2019–2020 S.E.A. Write Award Winners Information****Simon Tay (2019 winner)**

Simon Tay is 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. Prof Tay is also Senior Consultant at WongPartnership, a leading Asian law firm of some 300 lawyers and with offices in ASEAN, China and the Middle East. He served on the boards of leading global companies including MUFG Bank of Japan, Toyota Japan, and Deutsche Boerse (Asia), and was previously Corporate Advisor to Temasek Holdings (2006-09). Prof Tay is appointed as an Ambassador for Singapore, currently accredited to Greece on a non-residential basis. From 1992 to 2019, he served in a number of public appointments for Singapore including as Chairman of the National Environment Agency (2002-08); an Expert and Eminent Person in the ASEAN Regional Forum (2002–2019); an independent Member of Parliament (1997-2001); and to coordinate the country's equivalent of the Peace Corps (1990-93).



Prof Tay is a prize winning author of fiction and poetry. His 2010 novel *City of Small Blessings* was awarded the Singapore Literature Prize. He graduated in law from the National University of Singapore (1986), where he was president of the student union for three terms. He also holds a Masters in Law from Harvard Law School (1993-94), which he attended on a Fulbright Scholarship and where he won the Laylin prize for the best thesis in international law.

**Nadiputra (2020 winner)**

Almahdi Al-Haj Bin Ibrahim, atau lebih dikenali sebagai Nadiputra, merupakan seorang penulis drama, pelakon, pengarah dan penerbit. Beliau dianggap sebagai penulis yang unggul dalam bidang teater Melayu di dalam kalangan masyarakat Melayu dan telah berkecimpung dalam bidang teater lebih daripada lima dekad serta telah menghasilkan lebih daripada 300 naskhah pentas, radio, dan televisyen. Beliau telah menerima beberapa anugerah untuk persembahan teater termasuk Anugerah Pingat Budaya (Drama) pada tahun 1986 dan anugerah berprestij, Anugerah Tun Seri Lanang pada tahun 2013.

Dikenali sebagai seorang yang lucu, suka berseloroh dan bercanda, Nadiputra seorang penulis yang prolifik yang yakin bahawa "membaca merangsang idea-idea baharu manakala berinteraksi dengan seramai mungkin manusia, membuat seseorang mengakui hakikat kebenaran – dan ini sangat penting dalam penulisan skrip".

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 *Aungerah Tun Seri Lanang* 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 comes to term with realities—and this is essential in scriptwriting”.

You can download photos of Simon Tay and Nadiputra [here](#).

**ANNEX II: List of Former S.E.A. Write Award Winners Information**

- 1979 Edwin Thumboo  
1980 \*Masuri bin Sulikun  
1981 黄孟文 (Wong Meng Voon)  
1982 Ma Ilangkannan (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) (柳北岸 Pen name: 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)

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)

2019 Simon Tay

2020 Almahdi Al-Haj Ibrahim (Stage name: Nadiputra)

\*deceased