

NEWS RELEASE

First Time Writers & Illustrators Publishing Initiative uncovers fresh talents for publishing industry *14 books launched in the children's book genre*

Singapore, 16 November 2006 – Fourteen children's books by writers and illustrators nurtured under the inaugural First Time Writers & Illustrators Publishing Initiative were officially launched this morning at the Opening Ceremony of the Asian Children's Writers & Illustrator's Conference. Minister of State for Education, RADM (NS) Lui Tuck Yew was the Guest of Honour at the event.

Organised by the National Book Development Council of Singapore (NBDCS) and the Media Development Authority (MDA), the First-Time Writers & Illustrators Publishing Initiative aims to nurture aspiring local writers and illustrators and is among a slate of initiatives by MDA to develop fresh talents in the local publishing industry. The publishing industry is a key sector contributing *\$836 million to GDP and employing more than 6,000 people in 2004.”

From a pool of 200, 14 applicants were short-listed by a panel of judges comprising representatives from MDA, NBDCS and industry practitioners. The selected applicants attended workshops, seminars and Manuscript Assessment sessions to help them refine their works and marketing plans.

Since then, they have each produced charming tales to add to the growing pool of Singapore children's literature. From errant ducklings to samsui women, these stories not only depict the abundant culture of the East and West present in Singapore but also contribute to the expanding pool of Singapore children's literature.

Minister of State for Education, RADM (NS) Lui Tuck Yew, who officiated the launch said, “I applaud MDA and NBDCS for this First-Time Writers & Illustrators Publishing Initiative which is a good platform for aspiring Singapore talents. I am delighted and moved by the stories and captivating illustrations in these books. The vibrant colours of some, the simplicity of others and the artistry in all would touch the child in each of us.”

* These figures exclude the printing sector.

Executive Director of the NBDCS, Mr. R. Ramachandran appreciates the dedication and commitment of the writers and illustrators to their craft. He said, "The Initiative serves as a launch pad for them to embark on their respective careers in the literary arts while contributing to Singapore's growing pool of creative writers."

Commenting on the move to further grow the publishing sector, Mr Seto Lok Yin, MDA's Director of Industry Development said, "The main idea behind this Initiative is to encourage more of our budding writers to create wonderful children stories, have them published and enjoyed by readers not only in Singapore but all over the world. We brought the first batch of 14 books last month to the Frankfurt Book Fair, the world's biggest book fair, and were delighted by the interests from international publishers and distributors.

"Because of the encouraging response to last year's First-Time Writers & Illustrators Publishing Initiative, MDA and NBDCS are pleased to launch the second year of the Initiative. This year, in addition to the Children's' book genre, we are adding a graphic novel category. This should open up much more opportunities to our writers and illustrators," added Mr Seto Lok Yin.

Ms. Rosemarie Somaiah, a well-known teacher, storyteller and writer and one of the judges, is pleased to see the efforts of the budding writers and illustrators come to fruition. "I was very impressed by the variety of styles of the artwork and some of the gorgeous handmade books. This Initiative is a wonderful stimulus to pragmatic Singaporeans who will hopefully be encouraged to take the plunge into writing."

Heartened by the response from the public, the next phase of the First-Time Writers & Illustrators Publishing Initiative will be launched on a wider and grander scale. While the focus for submission remains children's genre, another parallel initiative will soon be launched to solicit works in the comics and graphic novel category.

The First-Time Writers & Illustrators Publishing Initiative is also supported by the National Library Board (NLB), Bookaburra Books, EarShot and The Society for Reading and Literacy (SRL).

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About Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA)

The Media Development Authority of Singapore (MDA) was formed on 1 January 2003 to champion Media 21, a blueprint to transform Singapore into a global media city. Media 21 seeks to create a vibrant media environment by establishing Singapore as a media exchange, exporting Made-by-Singapore content, internationalising local media companies, nurturing local media talent and developing digital media. More information on MDA can be found on www.mda.gov.sg.

About the National Book Development Council of Singapore (NBDCS)

The National Book Development Council of Singapore is a non-profit umbrella body inaugurated in February 1969 to promote storytelling, reading, writing and publishing.

The Council brings the book industry and literary community together through social events, courses, seminars, conferences and author lectures.

Since the Council was established in 1969, it has played an instrumental role to promote reading and writing in Singapore.

The Council's vision is to establish and develop Singapore as the Asian centre for publishing and the literary arts.

About First-Time Writers & Illustrators Publishing Initiative

The First-Time Writers & Illustrators Publishing Initiative is an initiative by the Media Development Authority (MDA) and the National Book Development Council of Singapore (NBDCS) to nurture talents in the publishing industry.

The Initiative is targeted at assisting the publication of new works by unpublished local writers and/or illustrators.

Works by the 14 writers and illustrators are featured on Singapore Media Fusion website (www.singaporemediafusion.com). The Singapore Media Fusion strategic positioning encapsulates the attributes of the media industry in showcasing Singapore as a global media city. It is a mark of the quality of our products and services, and the collective richness and diversity of the media industry. The positioning not only lends consistency in the manner to which the Singapore media industry is represented and promoted. It is also intended to enhance the image of Singapore media at an international level, in a compelling and coherent manner.