

# Popular BookFest kicks off



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All smiles: Nga (in batik shirt) with (from left) Shen, Ouyang, Yiu and Koo during the Popular BookFest 2024 opening ceremony of BookFest @Malaysia 2024 at KLCC in Kuala Lumpur. — MUHAMAD SHAHRIL ROSLI/The Star

KUALA LUMPUR: The much-anticipated BookFest @Malaysia 2024 has kicked off, marking the start of a lively nine-day celebration of books, authors and reading enthusiasts.

Adding to the excitement is the celebration of bookstore chain Popular's 100th anniversary, themed "Reading Together".

Expressing his enthusiasm for the 18th edition of BookFest @Malaysia, which has thrived since its start in 2006, Popular Holdings Limited chairman Yiu Chi Shing emphasised its goal of offering a diverse range of products to cater to the interests and needs of Malaysians.

"Throughout the years, Popular has been a champion of knowledge growth, highlighting the importance of books. This resonates perfectly with our publishing efforts and bookshop operations across Malaysia, Singapore, China and Euro-America, all of which serve as pillars for spreading knowledge to diverse communities.

"Our commitment has benefited people from all walks of life, inspiring them to become influential figures in their respective fields and contributing to societal development," he said during the opening ceremony of BookFest @Malaysia 2024 at Kuala Lumpur Convention Centre (KLCC) yesterday.

Yiu also urged support for the HOPE for Reading project, a collaborative initiative with Sin Chew Plus to improve access to quality reading materials for underserved communities.

The ceremony also saw 12 school principals being awarded RM1,000 worth of Popular book vouchers each.

On the celebration of World Book Day on April 23, Housing and Local Government Minister Nga Kor Ming said it is important to foster a nation that embraces reading.

He added that progress, development and prosperity are directly linked to a culture of literacy.

“Ignorance is the greatest obstacle to human civilisation, highlighting the crucial role of education in societal advancement,” he said.

He also encouraged Popular, a bookshop that originated in Singapore in 1924 and has since expanded to 78 branches in Malaysia, to mark its centennial by establishing a minimum of 100 new outlets.

Chinese Ambassador to Malaysia, Ouyang Yujing, said the exchange between the Chinese and Malaysian publishing industries is an important part of the cultural exchange between the two countries.

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“Malaysia’s well-established Chinese education system has laid a solid foundation for the steady development of Chinese publishing in Malaysia, leading to the continuous enhancement of the influence and competitiveness of Chinese publications in the country,” he added.

As a century-old brand in overseas Chinese publishing, Popular, he said, has evolved into the largest chain bookstore in Malaysia after weathering a century of trials and tribulations.

He also expressed hope that the bookstore chain will continue to prosper and actively expand its cooperation with mainland China, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan in various areas.

Also present were Popular Holdings Limited director Simon Shen and Sin Chew Media Corporation Bhd executive director and Sin Chew Daily chief executive officer Koo Cheng.

The 18th edition of BookFest is set to unfold from today to April 14 at KLCC.

Spanning across 100,000 sq ft, BookFest @Malaysia offers visitors a captivating experience across Halls 1 to 5 at the convention centre.

Beyond being a book fair, BookFest @Malaysia promises an immersive experience with a line-up of activities such as Author-Sharing Sessions, Competitions, Workshops and Demos.

Popular-The Star Readers’ Choice Awards for English reads and Popular BH-Anugerah Pilihan Pembaca for Malay reads mark their 14th iteration this year.

Set up in 2008 to encourage and recognise the talent of local authors, the Readers’ Choice Awards are organised in partnership with The Star Media Group and will also take centre stage during this nine-day event.