

# On the books

Organisers of the Hong Kong International Literary Festival aim to bring diversity and excitement to reading, writes **Samantha Leese**

**T**he names of authors, translators, journalists and poets visiting Hong Kong for the International Literary Festival (ILF) would themselves form the cast of a colourful page. They range from a former poet laureate to a former president, from a translator known to a former prime minister's daughter, and from one of the United States' most famous poets to one of Britain's first black female judges.

The 14th annual celebration of writing comprises more than 40 English language events to be held over 12 days from March 14 to 26 next month. They will include seminars, readings, workshops, poetry performances, and panel discussions.

Thought from a chairman of the ILF's board and a professor of English at the University of Hong Kong, said the festival aims to "optimal enjoyment, curiosity and enthusiasm for reading".

The festival includes an exciting international element as literature from Asia, after the double of the year's Man Booker Prize ceremony in Hong Kong in February 2013, was moved to the island's strongest live-up art destination, authors M Foy, Marie Perle, John Banville, Elizabeth Cline and John L'Heureux will read from their books during the festival, as an event in the Grand Ball at Grand Hyatt. The prize winner will be announced the next day.

For readers keen on writing in English, "the great development in English literature of the past 50 years" looks to argue, there may be "even exciting thought writing going on outside of high-Arabic language".

As well as providing an important platform for writers from across the region, the ILF aims to connect

writers of all ages with those who have influenced the genre. In December, school programmes will give students exposure to both local and overseas writing workshops with some of the authors.

"We have a cultural and educational mission," said vice "In a small city, we deserve an international culture, and the literary festival is part of that."

With the highest profile ever festival happening simultaneously from a range of the relative obscurity of the ILF, "this is a truly sort of European organisation," he admits.

But the festival festival is determined to grow and spread the love of an art form without which we would hardly be able, even here, to discuss what the world looks like in other people, and to enter imaginatively worlds that exist in our own."

Here are some highlights of the 2014 International Literary Festival.

## Booker Prize

The prize-winning author of *The Glass Palace* (2010) and *The Shadow Line* (2009) has concluded on a trilogy that is likely to be his magnum opus. The first instalment, *Sea of Cortez*, was shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2008.

"While writing *The Glass Palace* I developed an interest in the story of the migration of Indian subcontinental peoples," Cline says. "The trilogy began as an attempt to cover that story over time. What I had to read was something like *The White Ship* by Donald Mackenzie."

Set on the eve of the 1947 independence of India and China, when thousands of workers first left India following the burning of the ship in the collision, Pappas introduces a diverse cast of characters whose lives are thrown together onboard an ill-fated ship named the *Sea*.

The Hong Kong International Literary Festival will host a wide range of English language events over 12 days, such as seminars, readings, workshops, and discussions. Speakers include: from left, author Marie Perle, author M Foy, author John Banville and author John L'Heureux. Photo: Sherry Hui/Standard

The second book, *Sea of Cortez* will be released in June. The story continues to build up to the outbreak of the first world war in 1914 and takes place in the "Tribal Ocean", a large expanse of the Pacific where many Chinese fishermen lived.

**Dr Andrew Nathan**  
Frank Short's *Building the Man Booker Prize*, the former British year lecturer from 1980 to 1988, and teacher will read his memoir of the University of Hong Kong.

He will take part in the

University's 10th anniversary celebrations by giving a lecture at the place of poetry in the national culture.

As a literary club member, Perle will read from her new collection, *Laurels and Laurels*. Published in November 2013, it is a response to her poems dedicated to the past century of readers to reading those books. It will also discuss the Creative Path, a world collection to which the past decade with the better's characters and books, among other things.

Perle has been chairman of the British Arts Council's Committee for the Arts since 2008. He was knighted in 2009. Chairman/Director/Art Lecturer/Professor of Creative Writing, Trinity College, March 2011. Literary agent, Brown House, March 2011. Director of Hong Kong Association of Poets and Prose, March 2011. April 2012. Hong Kong Club



