

Singapore Writers Festival 2026 Closes With Close to 80,000 Festivalgoers

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The **Singapore Writers Festival 2026** has closed on a high. The 29th edition, organised by Arts House Group, wrapped up on 22 November with close to 80,000 festivalgoers, and Festival Passes sold out for the second year running even though more passes were released.



Special preview of Firasat: A Dikir Performance at the opening night of SWF 2026. Image: Moonrise Studio, courtesy of Arts House Group

Singapore Writers Festival 2026 at a glance

- Close to **80,000** festivalgoers
- Festival Passes sold out for the second consecutive year; more than 50% of ticketed programmes had sold-out sessions
- More than **240 programmes** across over 20 venues
- More than **400** local and international writers, moderators and speakers
- **15%** more Chinese, Malay and Tamil programmes
- Over **70%** growth in programmes supported by live interpretation and AI-assisted translation tools
- **30%** take-up rate for Culture Pass-eligible programmes

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Festival Director Yong Shu Hoong at the opening night of SWF 2026. Image: Moonrise Studio, courtesy of Arts House Group

Big names, long queues

Themed *Hidden in Plain Sight*, the festival drew headliners including novelist Amitav Ghosh, whose keynote challenged audiences on environmental grief and planetary collapse. Ghosh also joined Jemimah Wei and Balli Kaur Jaswal for *What The Family Doesnâ??t Say*. Ruha Benjamin examined hidden biases in digital technologies, while Silvia Moreno-Garcia explored truth and authenticity in writing. Book-signing queues for Ghosh, Stephen Witt and Faridah Ã?bÃkÃ©-Ã•yÃmÃdÃ© stretched beyond the theatre, with Ghosh saying he signed for almost an hour and a half. The new Crime and Mystery Spotlight also drew readers, with sold-out sessions such as the tabletop role-playing programme *Accuse You, Excuse Me*.

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Minister for Culture, Community and Youth David Neo at the Festival Bookstore. Image: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth

Multilingual and beyond the venue

SWF positions itself as one of Asiaâ??s premier multilingual literary festivals, with English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil programmes. Outside the main venues, *Undercurrents*, an installation by Tang Yau Hoong and Quek Hong Shin, transformed the Funan Underground Pedestrian Link. Literary trails, a coastal gathering with Orang Laut and Orang Pulau community members at West Coast Park, and the inaugural *Reading by the River* extended the festival into the city. Sold-out Salon sessions took place at venues such as Capella Singapore, Aman Gallery, COMO Cuisine and Kotuwa.

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Mr David Neo stopping by SWF Playground on opening night. Image: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth

Younger readers and young writers

SWF Playground and the youth-led Youth Fringe connected younger audiences with writers and creators. The mystery-writing challenge *The Ending Is Yours* received 537 submissions from 46 schools, and its public voting campaign, *The Verdict Is Yours*, drew over 1,300 votes. At the Closing Debate, Daryl Qilin Yam took home Best Speaker.



Mr David Neo with translators Amanda Ruiqing Flynn and Annaliza Bakri. Image: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth

What is next for SWF

Yong Shu Hoong concludes his tenure as Festival Director, with Yeow Kai Chai returning for the landmark **30th edition from 12 to 21 November 2027**, themed *Make It New!* and coinciding with ASEANâ??s 60th anniversary. In the meantime, the SWF Homage exhibition on literary translators, which collected more than 2,000 audio recordings, moves to **Sembawang Public Library (1 to 28 December 2026)** and then **Bukit Batok Public Library (29 December 2026 to 31 January 2027)**. Selected programmes will also be available online through SWF Digital.

Looking for more culture this season? Check our weekend things-to-do guide and our feature on the Marina Bay MRT shipwreck exhibition.

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Mr David Neo at the opening night of SWF 2026. Image: Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth

Images: Arts House Group (Moonrise Studio) and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth.

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