You are invited to visit the official website of Dr. Sheikh Sultan Bin Mohammed Al Qassimi, member of supreme council and ruler of Sharjah: www.sheikhdrsultan.ae
Sheikh Sultan bin Ahmed Al Qasimi launched the website of the reading campaign titled ‘Read, Dream, Create’, organised by the UAE Board on Books for Young People (UAEBBY), in the presence of Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi, UAEBBY Patron.

The campaign aims to encourage interaction between the young people and books, and build their capacity in reading, writing, innovation, and creativity through children’s stories. The reading campaign and website, HYPERLINK “www.readdreamcreate.ae” www.readdreamcreate.ae, is themed “From our Stories to yours: Your Imagination is the Key to an amazing new world”.

Sheikh Sultan bin Ahmed Al Qasimi lauded the UAEBBY’s role in supporting the strategy adopted by the UAE to create a cultured and creative generation. Sheikh Sultan also praised the role of the UAEBBY in supporting and encouraging a love for reading amongst children, which plays a vital role in creating an educated society, stressing that reading and developing children’s creative skills are instrumental factors that will have positive impacts on the general cultural scene as well as on building a bright future for the young and the nation alike.

The website, launched in both Arabic and English, is part of the nationwide reading drive organised by the UAEBBY in its quest to promote a culture of reading among all members of the Emirati society, with a special focus on children, to enhance communication skills and encourage creativity and among children, and highlight the fun and creative aspects of reading.

Commenting on the importance of the reading campaign, Sheikha Bodour bint Sultan Al Qasimi, said, “We seek through the campaign to highlight the importance of reading, show how fun and creative reading can be, and motivate children to really use their imaginations, be creative, and practice how to get their stories told.”

Sheikha Bodour pointed out that all community members would be involved in the implementation of the reading campaign to be part of it and encourage them to volunteer in cultural work. She clarified that the campaign mainly revolves around the idea of encouraging children to read and listen to stories through a number of activities and programmes carried out by the campaign. The aim of these activities is to stimulate children’s imaginations by letting them to listen to stories and then let their imaginations run wild to rebuild the story and rearrange its events the way they like.

Sheikha Bodour Al Qasimi stressed that children have talents and broad imaginations that can be nurtured and developed and for this reason campaign is designed to motivate children and young people to read and develop their skills through reading and interpreting stories and turning their ideas into stories that are well written.

The website features a brief about the campaign, and a facility for visitors to find out how to register with the campaign and participate in the competition. It also includes a table of all events and activities that will be carried out throughout the year, as well as the campaign’s video, and a special section for social media.

The website has also been designed with direct interaction with the children in mind, as can bee seen from the excerpt from the site: “We know you have stories to tell – and lots of them too. So this is your chance. Write your stories down – you can ask your parents or older brothers or sisters to help – and send them to us. The people at Read, Dream, and Create can’t wait to read about your amazing adventures and there is something very special in store for kids with the best story – your very own published book. That’s right; we will take your words and put them on brand new pages with beautiful pictures that children all over the UAE (and maybe even the world) can read. So if you want to see your words in a book - hurry up and Read, Dream, and Create.”
Reading is Child’s Play at SIBF

The halls at the Expo Center, Sharjah, are packed with book lovers of all ages. Children are crowding the book-seller’s stalls, looking through the unique selection on hand and asking their parents how many they can get. The book fair was established for just this purpose: to foster a love of reading in the next generation. And looking at the throngs of children pouring over books, it seems to be working.

“I like the variety of books I saw,” says Zibia Bardin, a 10 year old girl who is originally from New York City, but currently resides in Abu Dhabi. “I like English books, Lebanese books, and Arabic books. I really liked one book about cancer.” She and her older brother Jonas also enjoyed the demonstration by Ms. Cupcake, though they were hoping to help cook the desserts, in addition to eating them.

In a pink corner of the Expo Center, children play with a real-life Moda Moody, the cartoon from SpaceToon. Approximately 50 children sit at low tables, painting and coloring outlines of SpaceToon characters.

A few meters away, about 30 children learn exactly how much water is wasted when you brush your teeth with the tap on, after a lively demonstration that involves giant teeth and a large container of water. From the state of happy chaos in Hall 2, it is clear the event organizers have hit their mark.

The Sharjah book fair is open daily from 10am to 10pm until November 16th, 2013. All sessions are free and available on a first come first serve basis. For more information, visit www.sharjahbookfair.com.
A multi-awardee Sudanese writer could have set her eyes on writing at the wrong time. She started writing in Scotland in early 1990s when anti-Arab sentiment started to sweep the western world. But, it never discouraged her putting her instead on top of the situation and bringing her more successes than she could ever imagine.

Leila Abu Al Ella whose novel “Lyrics Alley” won the Fiction Winner of the Scottish Book Awards and short-listed for a Regional Commonwealth Writers Prize. “Lyrics Alley” and her other novels, “The Translator”, chosen as a “New York Times 100 Notable Book of the Year”, and “Minaret” were long-listed for the Orange Prize and the IMPAC Dublin Award.

Earlier, she also won the Caine Prize for African Writing for her short story, “The Museum”, included in the collection “Coloured Lights”, which went on to be short-listed for the Macmillan/Silver PEN award.

“At the time I started writing, Muslim writers were not given a chance, and very few Arabs and Muslims were given voice in western media. So, I am very conscious to always show in my fiction the aesthetics. I write them by engaging the readers to come and see something good and experience better the Muslim world. Now, the scenario has changed. I am too happy to say that,” Aboulela said.

Currently, BBC Radio has adapted her work extensively and broadcast a number of her plays, including “The Insider”, “The Mystic Life” and the historical drama “The Lion of Chechnya”. The five-part radio serialization of “The Translator” was also short-listed for the Race in the Media Award (RIMA).

Abu Al Ella’s ‘The Insider”, which she said “is a drama of the other side of the story of an unnamed Arab boy in the novel of French Nobel Prize winner, Albert Camus”, has been on broadcast until Saturday, 9 November, at BBC Radio 3 to mark the centenary of Camus’ birth. “I just told the other side of the story, adding to the background of this unnamed Arab boy, which was reflective of the colonial Algeria at the time.”

Her novels and plays, most of them characterized the people in Khartoum, including her poet uncle work, her old school and elderly lady, have become the center of her work. Her works have been translated into 13 languages and included in publications such as Granta, The Washington Post and the Virginia Quarterly Review.

Leila, whose Egyptian mother and Sudanese father, sent her to Khartoum American School and Sister School since 7, said that she is writing in English because her Arabic is bad. She grew up in Khartoum but when she started going to American schools, she began losing grips of her written and spoken Arabic language.
Technology is not a threat but compliment to cultural preservation

TECHNOLOGY has strong role in the preservation of culture and cultural sites as it makes it easy for documentation for future generations to learn, said an Emirati academic with bias in culture and heritage, Badria Al Shamsi.

“Contrary to fear held by many people, technology is a boon for culture. You can easily register and document cultural sites and you can as well transfer knowledge through channels such as Twitter or Facebook with simple lines.”

Badria was featuring on the panel of three discussing the topic, “Heritage as a Stimulus for Change” at the ongoing 32nd Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF) which ends on Nov. 16.

Chaired by Usama Murra from Sharjah’s Department of Culture and Information, other panelists included Ziad Jayousi from Palestine (with graphic exhibition on how the Zionists debase Arab culture) and Stephen Drake-Jones an “English man of Irish heritage subscribing to Catholic religion and I have lived in Spain for 38 years.”

Badria said as the world embraces globalisation, the communities should not change their identity.

“Some people contend that the culture of small nations can easily be swallowed by that of big states because of globalisation, but popular culture should be a source of motivation but not of changing identity.”

“The best we can do is to pass on authentic culture to future generations. It is like food: the ingredients remain the same but presented in fashionable way.”

On this, Ziad advised; “Be open to all cultures but protect yours” adding that “old buildings should be provided with modern facility to sustain them.”

For Stephen, he narrated his personal story of how he was born in English “Protestant” by the parents of Irish background who were Catholics during the height of religious segregation between Ireland and England.

“At one time, I was the only Catholic in a class of 40 pupils in school. I was banned from attending my religious instruction for three and a half years.

“On my way from Belfast to Dublin by train, we met the English army in Omagh and they through out people’s suitcases, stamped on them but spared me and shook my hand after hearing my accent being same as theirs. My fellow passengers fixed me eyes of hatred.”

The former English military officer said said his two daughters were born in Madrid where his family has lived for 38 years.

“They love their Irish heritage, read English history and proud to be born in Madrid. We live in diversity and respect people’s heritage.”

Zionists uprooting Arab culture

Ziad made a graphic presentation of how the Zionist are destroying Arab heritage and changing names of places to uproot their culture and identity yet “people without memory and past are rootless.”

“At one time, I was the only Catholic in a class of 40 pupils in school. I was banned from attending my religious instruction for three and a half years.

“The Zionists exert pressure on us by moving us out and replace our heritage with theirs. They change names of villages every month, claiming our kuffiah (caps) and traditional food such as falafel, uprooting our thousand-aged Olive trees and destroying our buildings but carefully taking our the stones to reconstruct theirs.”
Malayalam’s Status as Cultural Language Celebrated

Thousands of Indian expats flocked to the Sharjah International Book Fair (SIBF) Ballroom yesterday to attend the event “Celebrating the Proud Classical Status of Malayalam,” which brought together literary giants such as Kavalam Narayana Panicker, Adoor Gopalakrishnan, K. Jayakumar, Chemmanam Chacko, and actor Sreeraman. Following the absence of O.N.V. Kurup and Sugathakumari, visual tributes were shown to the audience.

Kavalam Narayana Panicker is an Indian dramatist, theatre director and poet who has written over 26 Malayalam plays in a career spanning over four decades.

Adoor Gopalakrishnan is an Indian film director, script writer, and producer, famously known for revolutionizing the face of Malayalam cinema, and has been awarded by the highest cinema award of Indian, the Dadasaheb Phalke Award in 2004. There was also an in-conversation session with him last evening at the Intellectual Hall.

These dignitaries shared their views on the language and the changes that have taken place over the years that brought it to this elevated level today.

Sumod Joy, one of the audience members, was disappointed that he couldn’t find a seat in the over-packed hall but was happy he got a glimpse of his literary idols. He said, “I am very delighted that SIBF has invited these people and I hope they will continue to invite more Malayalam poets.” Febeer Mohammad, another fan, expressed his joy too at being able to meet Panicker up close.

Commenting on the prestige of Malayalam being branded a classical language, “It is a great honor for us. But the language should be promoted more by movies and books, and should be taught in schools more. The community needs to strive a lot to make sure the next generation doesn’t forget the language.”

Traditional classical dances were also performed like Kerala Nadanam, and a performance on Sugathakumari’s Nandi by Maya, along with poems being recited by school children.

SIBF has planned a wide array of Indian events this year, including calling celebrities such as Chef Sanjeev Kapoor, Chef Vicky Ratnani, actress Deepti Naval, theatre personality Farook Sheikh, former president A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, and others.
Book launches stack up at SIBF

If you were hoping to meet one of your favorite authors at the Sharjah Book Fair this year, you’re not too late. The opening days of the fair have featured releases by Asma Puthanchira, Shabu Kikithattil, and Manu Rehman. Several exciting opportunities remain for you to meet the authors you admire and get your hands on a copy of a much-loved book, with the opportunity to have it signed by the author.

On Monday, 11 November, Balachandren Thekkanmar’s of the Sharjah Government will launch Reflections, which was published by the Sharjah Department of Culture and Information. A reading will be held for invited guests and the media. Afterwards, the public is invited for a question and answer session, concluding with a book signing.

On Tues, 12 November, meet Ravender Singh who will present his 2009 novel, I too had a Love Story. An instant best-seller in India, Singh’s first book is based on a real-life incident of being engaged, falling in love, and the untimely death of his fiancé. The author has also published Can Love Happen Twice, Love Stories That Touched My Heart, and Like It Happened Yesterday.

On Saturday, 16 November, Bilal Tanweer reads from The Scatter Here is too Great, a portrait of Karachi and its people. The novel is told through various points of view; all of whom witnessed a tragic bomb blast in the heart of the city. Tanweer has been hailed as an important new voice from Pakistan in his stunning debut.

The fair will be open daily from 10am to 10pm for eleven days. All sessions are free and available on a first come first serve basis. For more information, visit www.sharjahbookfair.com.