

## PROFILE

# 2012 Nobel Prize for Literature to Mo Yan

## An award for all Asians' aspirations

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Chinese author Mo Yan, who left school for a life working the fields at the age of 12, has become the first Chinese citizen ever to win the Nobel Prize for Literature, praised by the Swedish Academy for merging "folk tales, history and the contemporary"

Singaporean writer and poet Felix Cheong says he was elated upon hearing Mo Yan had won this year's Nobel Prize for Literature.

"The award comes on the crest of a tsunami wave of Chinese achievements over the past five years - the Beijing Olympics, Shanghai Expo and Li Na's French Open win," he says.

"It shows China flexing her muscles and being recognized for it - not just economically but also in the sports and artistic arenas. The fear now is whether the rest of us in Asia can measure up to these

achievements. At the same time, it also sets the bar higher for us."

Cheong says Mo's achievement will "open the door to more young people in China to pick up the pen and write seriously rather than just blogging and tweeting. It will lead to more Chinese writers being published internationally. Mo Yan won't be the last Chinese to win the Nobel Prize for Literature. I'm sure of it".

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David Parker, chairman of the Man Asian Literary Prize (MALP) and a professor of English at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, says the award will "mean that contemporary

Chinese writing will, at last, get the global recognition it deserves”.

“Certainly, writers, such as Jiang Rong, Yu Hua, Su Tong, Bi Feiyu and Yan Lianke - all shortlisted for the MALP - are writers of global stature,” he says.

“This Nobel success will be good for them, as well as for younger Chinese writers.”

Singaporean writer Alvin Pang, who won the Singapore Young Artist of the Year award for Literature in 2005, says: “It’s about time, given the history of Chinese literature. I think Chinese writers, in general, are confident enough to know their works are essentially world-class.

“China is such a big, old, venerable civilization that, frankly, it’s a disgrace the writers haven’t been recognized until now I would be very surprised if there weren’t another Chinese winner within the next half century, or 20 to 30 years.”

So, too, believes Tapati Mukhopadhyay, acting vice-chancellor of Visva-Bharati, the

Born Guan Moye,

Mr. Mo adopted the pen name of Mo Yan — meaning “don’t speak” in Chinese.

Mr. Mo revealed in a speech in Hong Kong that he chose the name to remind himself of the lines he could not cross as a writer in a country where the government routinely censors the works of authors and artists.



university in India’s West Bengal province that Rabindranath Tagore founded with the money from Asia’s first Nobel in 1913.

“It is a matter of great pride and honor. China is our neighbor and a country with which India’s ties go back to ancient times. When a representative from China and the Orient receives the highest literary award, we feel proud as Asians.”

From Dec 18, Chinese and Indian universities and institutions will be celebrating Asia’s first Nobel as well as Tagore’s association with China with a yearlong series of programs to be held in Beijing, New Delhi and other cities in both countries.

Ashud Ahmed, consul-general of Bangladesh in Hong Kong, says Mo’s achievement will make the outside world aware of China’s rich civilization.

“The subcontinent has long links with China and an Asian’s success will help Asia establish itself in the world forum.”