



Sharjah will showcase UAE's rich history of engagement with children's literature at Bologna Children's Book Fair 2020

Sharjah Book Authority announces emirate's guest of honour programme at a press conference in Milan

The Sharjah Book Authority (SBA) has revealed Sharjah's 'guest of honour' cultural programme at the upcoming Bologna Children's Book Fair (BCBF) 2020, which will be taking place from March 30 to April 2, at a press conference organised by the BCBF management in Milan on February 11.

Taking members of the Italian and international press as well as other attendees of the press event through the details of Sharjah's programme, Khoula Al Mujaini, Director of Fairs and Festivals at SBA said: "This will be Sharjah's first participation as guest of honour at a children's book fair, and we are delighted to be here."

Al Mujaini revealed a packed cultural programme the emirate has built for the book fair, saying it will feature a diversity of events and activities that will be led by a stellar line-up of more than 20 authors, illustrators, storytellers and publishers from the UAE and wider Arab region. She emphasised that the emirate's guest of honour agenda will be led by SBA and partnering cultural entities to educate Italian and international audiences about the UAE's rich history of engagement with children's literature.

Opportunities for Emirati – Italian collaboration

Sharjah will be using the BCBF 2020 platform to foster collaboration and exchange between illustrators and children's author, noted Al Mujaini, saying preparations for one such initiative have been underway for over a year. SBA rolled out an 'Illustration Production Workshop' in February 2019 to upskill Emirati illustrators specialised in children's books, and train them to participate at BCBF 2020. The outcomes of this workshop series, which was led by renowned artists from around the world, will be presented at the Sharjah Pavilion in BCBF 2020.

“We continue to empower authors, illustrators and publishers in the field, helping them create literary content that is more appealing and relatable to new-age readers,” said Al Mujaini.

Cultural events, talks, translations

Sharjah will continue its thrust in building bridges between cultures at BCBF 2020 with the selection of Arabic–Italian translated works by 10 Emirati authors to the fair. These books will be available for visitors at the Sharjah Pavilion, which will be accompanied by six book signing events.

Sharjah will also organize three panel discussions that will throw light on the latest developments and achievements of the UAE and the region in children’s literature. These discussions will showcase Sharjah’s innovative literary projects which have resulted in boosting the number of homegrown publications, emerging translation opportunities and the rise of digital content as well as audiobooks.

Dedicated programme for children in the city’s schools and theatres

Other activities will include hands-on children’s workshops that will teach kids how to create illustrations inspired by the Arabic alphabet; interactive storytelling sessions, two film shows at the Testoni Theatre, two live and interactive plays inspired by the popular Mimi’s children’s story series, and four school visits across Bologna city to showcase the Arab region’s literature and culture.

Highlighting Sharjah’s continued efforts to stress on the importance of books and reading in shaping communities, especially young imaginations, Al Mujaini noted: “This book fair is a wonderful platform to be presenting Sharjah’s efforts and initiatives dedicated to making the world of books and reading more exciting and accessible to young readers, under the leadership and guidance of His Highness Sheikh Dr. Sultan bin Muhammad Al Qasimi, Supreme Council Member and Ruler of Sharjah. With our city celebrating its status as the UNESCO World Book Capital (SWBC) 2019, we have been approaching our efforts and ambitions in a way that can have a stronger and sustainable regional and global impact.”

The events and activities that define Sharjah’s GoH cultural programme for the book fair will take the fair’s visitors on a journey to discover Sharjah’s efforts over four decades to establish a comprehensive cultural project, and offer a vibrant platform for Emirati–Italian collaboration.