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For immediate release

**PERSISI celebrates SG50 and showcases the Malay Language through *Pencak Silat*
at Bulan Bahasa 2015**

Spurred on by the positive feedback and response by visitors during Bulan Bahasa 2013 and 2014, PERSISI is back to showcase its moves and comprehensive collection of weaponry at this year's launch weekend. Visitors will also be able to take a journey through the history and evolution of *Pencak Silat* in Singapore as PERSISI celebrates SG50 as well as the Malay language at Bulan Bahasa 2015.

Highlighting Women's Role in *Pencak Silat*

Every year, the federation explores and showcases a different theme, and this year they have chosen to celebrate SG50 with an exhibition that highlights how the teaching and learning of *Pencak Silat* has evolved since Singapore's independence.

The role of women will be featured prominently in this exhibition. According to PERSISI's general secretary Mdm Isiah, young women were not allowed to learn *silat* in the past but they felt that they should be equipped with this skill. Thus, special sessions were introduced specially for women and taught on training grounds separate from the men. Some even learnt and practiced their *silat* moves in their own kitchens or rooms.

Women also learnt specific weapons and had their own range of terminology and references different from the men. These weapons consisted of items that were part of their everyday attire, for example the *cindai* (a cloth used to cover their heads), batik sarong, and a hair pin. They also learnt to use the short stick and dagger.

For Mdm Isiah, she hopes that this theme and emphasis on women will motivate young girls to take *silat* as a form of self-defense. The inspiration for the focus on women can also be traced back to an incident when she was bullied by a group of boys during a picnic with her classmates at Changi Beach. Only a secondary two student then, she bravely chose to face the group of eight to 10 boys while the rest of her classmates fled. Despite being outnumbered, she was able to defend herself and was later rescued by some grownups that spotted the commotion. This incident made her realize that self-defence is very important to girls in situations where they could otherwise be helpless.



Interaction – the Best Way to Learn

PERSISI adopts the attitude that experience is the best way to learn. With this in mind, visitors to the PERSISI exhibition and demonstration will get to be part of the action as visitors will be invited to learn and try out the basic steps of *Silat*. Volunteers will be around to explain the steps so that visitors will be able to understand why and what they are doing.

To Mdm Isiah, language is also best learnt through personal interaction. She feels that interacting and engaging with the visitors are the most powerful moments when they can use the Malay language to explain and share more about silat. There are also many Malay terms and vocabulary that visitors can learn through the hands-on activities.

“Pencak Silat and Bahasa Melayu have a lot in common and Bulan Bahasa provides an excellent platform to promote both the sport as well the Malay language, tradition and culture associated with it,” said Mdm Isiah Majid. *“Traditionally, Silat is not just a sport but an activity that is very much a part of the Malay culture and I’m glad that the recent SEA Games have helped to heighten awareness and hopefully increase popularity of this martial art.”*

Pencak Silat at the Gardens by the Bay

Visitors can watch and take part in the *silat* demonstrations as well as view the exhibition at the Supertree Grove at Gardens by the Bay on 5 September 2015. For full event listings, please refer to the Bulan Bahasa website at mbms.sg or follow Majlis Bahasa Melayu Singapura at www.facebook.com/majlisbahasa.

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Interviews can be arranged with Mdm Isiah Majid, PERSISI general secretary, as well as participants from PERSISI who will be performing during the Bulan Bahasa 2015 launch weekend. A full profile of Mdm Isiah is also available upon request.

About Bulan Bahasa

The Malay Language Month (Bulan Bahasa) was first launched in 1988 by the Malay Language Council, Singapore, as an initiative and biennial event to encourage the Malay community to embrace the Malay language and culture in their daily lives. Since 2010, it has become an annual signature celebration that continues to attract community participation and support, at national as well as grassroots level. Bulan Bahasa remains focused on cultivating greater confidence in the use and mastery of the Malay language,



instilling a deeper appreciation for and promoting the preservation of the rich Malay culture and heritage.

For more information about the Malay Language Council, Singapore, and Bulan Bahasa, please visit mbms.sg and facebook.com/majlisbahasa.