

Our Singapore Spirit, told through the *Singapore Chronicles* Series

By Sim Jui Liang
IPS Research Assistant



Authors of the first 10 Singapore Chronicles series titles launched on 10 December (Photo: IPS)

“There is a certain Singapore Spirit that courses through our history, and through the volumes of the Singapore Chronicles. The Singapore Spirit is made up of the qualities shown by our pioneers as they made a big difference, out of almost nothing, by being resilient, rugged, resourceful. It has grown out of our place in the world — principled, adaptable, self-reliant and open to the world. And it is what we have developed amongst ourselves as friends and neighbours — paying attention to and caring for one another; drawing strength from our rich racial, religious and cultural diversity.”

Minister for Finance Heng Swee Keat made this observation when he launched the *Singapore Chronicles* series on 10 December this year, at the National University of Singapore.

The *Singapore Chronicles* series was initiated by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) to commemorate Singapore's 50th year of Independence. Conceived as short primers, the primary purpose of the series is to record, explain and offer insights into what makes Singapore, Singapore. The inaugural launch featured the first 10 titles in the 50-volume series. The entire series will cover a wide range of topics that make up life in Singapore.

He added that when IPS presented its proposal on the *Singapore Chronicles* to the SG50 Steering Committee, which he chaired, it was readily supported by the committee members. They found it to be "a worthy and exciting project: It is unprecedented in scope and takes a relevant approach." Congratulating IPS on creating "this knowledge bank for us to gain a deeper understanding of our past and ourselves", Minister Heng said that by reading the *Singapore Chronicles* primers, Singaporeans can build on our history and grow the Singapore Spirit.

IPS Director Janadas Devan, who initiated the series, explained IPS' approach to the books in his speech. "Primers are supposed to convey the general state of knowledge on any particular subject" instead of arguing in favour of one viewpoint over another, he said. Each *Singapore Chronicles* volume seeks to be as objective as possible, while not pretending to be the last word on the subject. Primers, moreover, are not intended to be academic tomes, and IPS has asked all the authors to write their books in a manner accessible to the intelligent lay reader. The co-publisher of the series, Straits Time Press, is also making the books affordable, at \$16 for each of the 10 titles.



The first 10 titles: *Colonial Singapore* by Dr Nicholas Tarling; *Constitution* by Dr Kevin Tan; *Defence* by Ho Shu Huang and Dr Samuel Chan; *Diplomacy* by Dr Evelyn Goh and Dr Daniel Chua; *Education* by Dr Saravanan Gopinathan; *Eurasians* by Dr Alexius Pereira; *Heritage* by Kennie Ting; *Indians* by Dr Vineeta Sinha; *Law* by Dr Goh Yihan; and *Presidency* by Dr Thio Li-ann. (Photo: IPS)

Mr Devan also recalled an excerpt from the foreword he had penned for the series: “*Singapore Chronicles* is a reminder that Singapore is a human-made miracle. May it also serve as a reminder that Singapore is not defined by the accolades it receives, but by the constant striving of Singaporeans to always do better, to exceed themselves, to go beyond the achieved, the accomplished, the done. From the beginning, the story of Singapore has always been about the future.”

The audience at the launch included, in addition to authors of the books, members of the civil service, diplomatic corps, academia and the corporate sector.

Sim Jui Liang is a Research Assistant at the Institute of Policy Studies. He is part of the IPS editorial team for the Singapore Chronicles book series.

If you have comments or feedback, please email ips.eneews@nus.edu.sg



© Copyright 2015 National University of Singapore. All Rights Reserved.

You are welcome to reproduce this material for non-commercial purposes and please ensure you cite the source when doing so.