

Book Launch of *The Ocean in a Drop – Singapore: The Next Fifty Years*

By Andrew Yeo
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IPS launched [*The Ocean in a Drop – Singapore: The Next Fifty Years*](#) on 30 October at the Singapore Management University (SMU). More than 100 guests, including students, attended the launch. The guest of honour was Mr S R Nathan, the sixth President of the Republic of Singapore.

The book, by 2014/15 S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore Mr Ho Kwon Ping, is a compilation of the [IPS-Nathan Lecture Series](#) and features highlights of the accompanying dialogue during the lectures.

Delivering his welcome remarks, IPS Director Janadas Devan began by paying tribute to Mr Nathan's extensive career achievements. "The S R Nathan Fellowship for the Study of Singapore was established to honour one of Singapore's most distinguished public servants, whose career in public service spans everything — social work, trade unions, diplomacy, to intelligence and academia."

He also noted how successful the lecture series had been, highlighting the capacity crowds at each lecture and the diversity in the age of the participants. Mr Devan, to the amusement of the crowd, also thanked Mr Ho for being "garrulous" and choosing to deliver five lectures when he had the option of four, before more seriously lauding his ability to deliver lectures that "provoked both discussion and reflection".

Mr Ho's speech was themed on the interrogative word, "why". "Asking why has led me to be thrown out of Stanford, jailed in California, barred from entry to the USA for two decades, and detained in Singapore under the Internal Security Act," he said. However, asking why is also rooted in independent and critical enquiry, and reinforces your original position, he added. Expressing his wishes for the book, he said that he hoped it would stimulate readers, particularly the young, into critically thinking about the Singapore they want to live in over the next 50 years.

Mr Nathan thanked Mr Ho for his ideas, and fondly recollected seeing him in his different incarnations. "Over the years, I've known Kwon Ping and seen him since the stages of his early life — as a rebel of society, as an able scholar, as a successful businessman, and now, the prestigious head of a university in Singapore,"

he said. With Mr Ho's rich and vast experiences in life, it is befitting that his ideas on how governance could evolve are put into a book, he intimated, given that the future could be one marked by slow growth, turbulence in and around the region, and religious tension.

The launch at SMU closed with a book-signing session by Mr Ho, his second for the week. The very next day, Kinokuniya bookstore organised a well attended Meet-the-Author session, where Mr Ho interacted with an audience of 50 before occupying himself with more signings to conclude a well-booked weekend.

[The Ocean in a Drop — Singapore: The Next Fifty Years](#) retails at \$25 (softcover) and \$48 (hardcover) in bookstores

Andrew Yeo is a Research Assistant (Special Projects) at IPS, and contributes to the work of the S R Nathan Fellow for the Study of Singapore

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