

First 10 titles of 50-volume Singapore Chronicles are out

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A series of 50 books has been released to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Singapore's independence.

Launched this morning by Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat at the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Law School, the Singapore Chronicles covers topics from governance and the economy, to sports, food and, flora and fauna, and aims to record and offer insights into what makes Singapore, Singapore. A collaboration between The Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) and Straits Times Press, the book publishing arm of Singapore Press Holdings, each volume, which is written by subject experts from the public sector, academia and journalism, is between 100 and 150 pages, and serves as a primer on the subject.

Minister Heng said this morning: "I believe you cannot build towards the future without a deep understanding and appreciation of the past. The Singapore Chronicles serve not only as a reminder of how far we have come, but as a reference for our way forward. This series of primers is a factual analysis of events, institutions and processes. These are not polemical tracts that argue one way or the other. The point is not to establish a definitive point of view, but to make available our history – readers are free to form our own impressions.

"When we grow our knowledge bank, we also grow the intangibles that can't be put on paper. Out of facts – understanding. Out of our achievements – humility. Out of our failures – wisdom. Out of our challenges – hope. Out of our differences – trust. Out of our past – A future. Out of everything that we have gone through together – our Singapore Spirit."

The first 10 titles were announced today and are now at major bookstores at \$16 each, inclusive of GST. The remaining 40 books will be available next year.

IPS director Janadas Devan said: "It is a reminder of what makes Singapore human, what makes Singapore tick. From the beginning, Singapore was made for the future."

Here are the first 10 titles:

1. Colonial Singapore

By Nicholas Tarling, Fellow of the New Zealand Asia Institute

This book is a history of Singapore from the founding of a settlement by Raffles in 1819, to the post-imperial phase inaugurated by World War II and the Japanese invasion. It shows how colonial Singapore matured as an economy and developed as a society even as it grew into a commercial centre that was also a centre for the movement of people and ideas.

2. Constitution

By Kevin YL Tan, adjunct professor of law at NUS and Nanyang Technological University (NTU)

This book traces the development of Singapore's constitution and analyses our unique representative model, and examines the roles of the Executive and Judiciary.

3. Defence

By Ho Shu Huang, associate research fellow at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies, NTU and Samuel Chan, adjunct lecturer, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy

This primer provides an introduction to Singapore's defence policy and why it has adopted the approach that it has. The domestic challenges faced from possessing such an expensive, albeit formidable and technologically-advanced force are also examined.

4. Diplomacy

By Professor Evelyn Goh, Shedden professor of strategic policy studies and research director of the Strategic & Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, and Daniel Chu, research fellow with the Military Studies Programme, Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, S Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

This book shows how Singapore has dealt with many daunting challenges, including separation from Malaysia, independence; communist insurgency; racial tensions, terrorism, and transboundary pollution. It also derives lessons from the past half-century that can help Singapore develop even more agile diplomatic responses and far-sighted strategic planning.

5. Education

By Professor S Gopinathan, adjunct professor, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, NUS, and senior adviser, The Head Foundation

This book examines the impact of education on Singapore's transformation by studying the social, political and economic contexts within which policy and practice are embedded. It examines the key imperatives and principles that drove policy formulation, the success and failures of policy implementation, and how the state, at various times, fashioned education to meet its imperatives.

6. Eurasians

By Alexius A Pereira, deputy director, Research and Statistics Division, Ministry of Home Affairs

Exploring the social history of Singapore Eurasians – focusing particularly on the 50 years since Independence – the author, himself a Eurasian, also explains how one cardinal principle of post-colonial Singapore – the ideology and policy of multiracialism – has affected the evolution of the Eurasian identity.

7. Heritage

By Kennie Ting, group director, Museums and Development, National Heritage Board

A guide to Singapore's heritage and, its preservation and promotion since 1959, when Singapore attained full self-government, and thereafter for the first 50 years of Independence. The book concludes with a reflection on the future of heritage – whence it came, where it goes.

8. Indians

By Professor Vineeta Sinha, Head of the South Asian Studies Programme and the Department of Sociology, NUS

The author maps the socio-economic, religious and linguistic complexities of the community, which are further complicated by ongoing new arrivals from India.

9. Law

By Associate Professor Goh Yihan, Singapore Management University

Beginning with the British years and moving on to the post-Independence period, the legal system has had to be refined as Singapore embraced technological advances and globalisation. This is a story of a fast-changing and yet remarkably stable legal system that has been the cornerstone of Singapore's commitment to the rule of law.

10. Presidency

By Professor Thio Li-ann, chief-editor of the Singapore Journal of Legal Studies, and provost chair professor, Faculty of Law, NUS

The Elected Presidency represents one of the most distinctive institutional innovations that Singapore has made to the constitutional order in the first 50 years of its existence. This book traces the fascinating twists and turns of the relatively short history of the Elected Presidency in Singapore and how it has reached a new equilibrium.