



MEDIA RELEASE
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50 YEARS OF SINGAPORE TAMIL LITERATURE DIGITISED
AS A GIFT TO THE NATION

Singapore, 22 August 2015 – In commemoration of SG50, a collection of 350 Tamil literary works of Singapore from 1965 to 2015 has been digitised as the Indian community's gift to the nation. This unprecedented ground-up initiative led by the Tamil Digital Heritage (TDH) Group in partnership with the National Library Board (NLB) has come to fruition following the launch of this project in 2013. This effort is also supported by the National Heritage Board (NHB), the National Arts Council (NAC), the National Book Development Council of Singapore (NBDCS), as well as the Tamil writers.

Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance, Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam launched the TDH collection at the Drama Centre, National Library Building this evening. Joining him to celebrate the completion of this special collection was the project's patron, Mr S Iswaran, Minister in Prime Minister's Office and Second Minister for Home Affairs and Trade and Industry.

As the lead agency supporting this community project, NLB managed the digitisation, and worked together with the TDH Group to digitise the 350 Tamil literary works as well as proof reading and annotation of the digitised forms. Close to 100 Tamil authors and teachers came forward to annotate these 350 books. Over 250 volunteers as well as NLB's staff were also involved in proofreading more than 50,000 pages of the literary works.

The public can now appreciate 50 years of Singapore Tamil literature, ranging from published novels to poems and short stories by accessing them in our libraries and on NLB's BooksSG¹ portal, anytime and anywhere (<http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/printheritage/>).

¹ NLB's BookSG hosts a digital collection of Singapore and Southeast Asia's print heritage.

Mrs Elaine Ng, Chief Executive Officer of the National Library Board said, “These digitised Singapore Tamil literary works greatly enrich our library’s collection of Singapore’s published heritage. As we celebrate our Golden Jubilee, we are happy to have this precious gift to the nation hosted on our BookSG portal. The digitised collection will serve as a vital resource for learning as well as reference for present and future generations.”

Ms Trudy Loh, Director, Language, and Heritage Institutions, National Heritage Board, said, “This project presents 50 years of literary treasure from the community and also the story of a nation and her people. Language is an important tool to convey culture and heritage, and to keep them alive and relevant in daily use. We are proud to have been a part of this project and to see its fruition in time for Singapore’s 50th anniversary”.

Mr Khor Kok Wah, Senior Director of the National Arts Council’s Literary Arts Sector said, “NAC supports this project as it aims to preserve our Tamil literary heritage, and uses technology to bring Tamil literature to new audiences. It enables readers, writers, students and researchers anywhere in the world to use literature as a tool to talk about shared experiences and issues pertinent to daily life, while enjoying a comprehensive resource on Tamil writing from Singapore.”

Mr R Ramachandran, Executive Director of the National Book Development Council of Singapore said, “The Tamil Digital Heritage Project is a unique initiative in Singapore that will enable more people to encounter and enjoy our local Tamil writers and their works – at the click of a mouse. The Book Council is very pleased and excited for the launch of this meaningful literary project, which we believe will excite readers worldwide.”

Mr Arun Mahizhnan, chief coordinator of the TDH group said, “We wanted the Indian community to offer something to Singapore that will last well beyond the time of celebrations. This digital collection, will serve generations to come. Besides, it will set an example of citizen efforts to serve the country as this project would not have been made possible without the generosity of the authors, volunteers and the community at large.”

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About Tamil Digital Heritage Project Group

The Tamil Digital Heritage Group comprises a small group of individuals who came together for this special project. They have long dedicated themselves to the preservation and promotion of Tamil language and literature in Singapore. They consider this project a service to their language, their community and their beloved country. They also wish to make a meaningful contribution to mark the nations' 50th anniversary of Independence.

About National Library Board

The National Library Board (NLB) nurtures Readers for Life, Learning Communities and a Knowledgeable Nation. Through the National Library and its network of 25 public libraries, NLB promotes reading, learning and information literacy. By forging strategic partnerships to cultivate knowledge sharing, the libraries also encourage appreciation and awareness of Singapore's history through their wide range of programmes and collection on Singapore and regional content. The National Archives of Singapore, an institution of NLB, oversees the collection, preservation and management of public and private archival records, including government files, private memoirs, maps, photographs, oral history interviews and audio-visual materials. NLB also uses innovative technology to provide access to its digital library resources and services, and archival collection. Established on 1 September 1995 as a statutory board, NLB is now under the Ministry of Communications and Information (MCI).

For more information on NLB, please visit www.nlb.gov.sg

About National Heritage Board

The National Heritage Board (NHB) was formed on 1 August 1993. As the custodian of Singapore's heritage, NHB is responsible for telling the Singapore story, sharing the Singaporean experience and imparting our Singapore spirit. NHB's mission is to preserve and celebrate the shared heritage of our diverse communities, for the purpose of education, nation-building and cultural understanding. It manages the national museums and heritage institutions, and sets policies relating to heritage sites, monuments and the national collection. Through the national collection, NHB curates heritage programmes and presents exhibitions to connect the past, present and future generations of Singaporeans. NHB is a statutory board under the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Please visit www.nhb.gov.sg for more information.

About the National Arts Council

The National Arts Council champions the arts in Singapore. By nurturing creative excellence and supporting broad audience engagement, we want to develop a distinctive global city for the arts. With a nod to tradition and an eye to the future, we cultivate accomplished artists and vibrant companies. Our support for the arts is comprehensive – from grants and partnerships to industry facilitation and arts housing. The Council welcomes greater private and corporate giving to and through the arts so that together we can make the arts an integral part of everyone's lives. For more information on the Council's mission and plans, please visit www.nac.gov.sg.

About National Book Development Council of Singapore

The National Book Development Council of Singapore (NBDCS) is a non-profit organisation that promotes storytelling, reading, writing, and publishing through a variety of programmes and festivals, including the Asian Festival of Children's Content and the All In! Young Writers Festival. NBDCS also presents many annual and biennial awards, including the Singapore Literature Prize and the Hedwig Anuar Children's Book Award for works published in Singapore; the Scholastic Asian Book Award, and the Scholastic Picture Book Award for unpublished works. Their training arm, the Academy of Literary Arts and Publishing (ALAP), also runs publishing-related and literary arts-focused courses and workshops throughout the year.

For more information, please visit bookcouncil.sg.