

Launch of National Essay Competition on "Singapore: The First Ten Years of Independence"

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The National Library Board (NLB) launched the National Essay Competition and "Singapore: The First Ten Years of Independence" guide at the National Library on 29 March 2008. The event was co-organised with the History Association of Singapore (HAS). Mr Ho Kwon Ping, Executive Chairman of Banyan Tree Holdings Limited was the Guest of Honour.

The event began with a welcome address by Dr N Varaprasad, Chief Executive, NLB and a brief introduction of the HAS by its President, Dr Kho Ee

Moi. Mr Ho Kwon Ping then shared his experience of living in Singapore during the period 1965 to 1975 and spoke on "Leadership in Singapore: Past, Present and Future". This was followed with a lively question-and-answer session.

Both the essay competition and the guide are part of a larger project, which also includes a travelling exhibition. The project was conceptualised in response to the recent passing of a few members of the first Cabinet and the realisation that many young Singaporeans are not familiar

with the Old Guard and their contributions to Singapore. Hence, the objective of the essay competition and the guide is to raise greater knowledge and awareness among students and young Singaporeans of the contributions and challenges faced by the first Cabinet of the Republic of Singapore.

Participating students are required to write an essay on their views on the first decade of Singapore's nation building after its independence in 1965 and what the first Cabinet's leadership means to them. They are encouraged to include the experiences of their parents and grand-

parents who have lived through that period of time and witnessed how Singapore's first Cabinet Ministers overcame the challenges. Interested participants are required to submit their essays online at <http://firstcabinet.nl.sg> by 20 June 2008. More details of the competition are available on the website.

The "Singapore: The First Ten Years of Independence" guide contains short write-ups on the key challenges that confronted the early national leaders and how the issues were overcome. The guide includes rarely-seen photographs of the first Cabinet Ministers, and a resource list

of books, newspaper articles, websites, pictures and other important rare materials, which are available at the National Library and the National Archives of Singapore. Students are strongly encouraged to refer to this guide for their essays.

The launch was attended by 120 guests, including history teachers and students. Every student received a complimentary copy of the guide. Free copies of the guide have been given to all primary and secondary schools and junior colleges in Singapore. Limited copies of the guide will also be available for loan in all NLB libraries.



Guest of Honour Mr Ho Kwon Ping delivering the talk on "Leadership in Singapore: Past, Present and Future"



Unveiling the web address for the National Essay Competition



Students listening with rapt attention to Mr Ho Kwon Ping