

# 350 local Tamil literary works digitally archived

Public can now access 50 years of material in public libraries and on NLB's BooksSG portal

**Ng Huiwen**

Tamil writers and poets hailed a "proud moment" for their community yesterday after a heritage group completed the task of digitally recording 350 local Tamil literary works.

The public can now easily access archives of 50 years of local Tamil literature, ranging from published novels to poems to short stories.

Launched by Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office S. Iswaran yesterday at the National Library Building, the Tamil Digital Heritage Collection features 80 prominent Tamil writers and poets such as Mr P. Krishnan, Ms Jayanthi Shankar and Mr KTM Iqbal.

"The digital collection has given our Tamil literature books of the last 50 years not only a new lease of

life but also a long lease of life," said Mr Tharman, who is also Minister for Finance. "The memories of our writers will seed new memories in the next generation and spur new imagination and new writings."

The Tamil Digital Heritage Group first mooted the project in 2013, in partnership with the National Library Board (NLB). About 100 Tamil authors and teachers helped to annotate the 350 books, while more than 250 volunteers worked with NLB staff to proofread some 50,000 pages of literary works.

The heritage group's chief coordinator Arun Mahizhnan said: "We wanted to offer something to Singa-

pore that will last well beyond the time of SG50 celebrations. This digital collection will serve generations to come and sets an example of citizen efforts."

Mr Iqbal, 75, who received the Cultural Medallion award last year, agreed, calling it a "proud moment for Singapore and the Tamil literary community".

"It gives local literature a permanent presence in our country's cultural history," he added.

"Young writers and poets can read and learn from these works, while teachers will be able to use them in classes in secondary schools and even universities."

The local poet has 10 literary works digitised in the collection.

The collection is now available in public libraries and on the NLB's BooksSG portal.

The project was also supported by the National Heritage Board, the National Arts Council and the National Book Development Council of Singapore.

[nghuiwen@sph.com.sg](mailto:nghuiwen@sph.com.sg)