

SPEECH BY TUAN HAJI SHA'ARI TADIN, SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY
SECRETARY (CULTURE), AT THE PRESENTATION OF LITERARY
AWARDS ORGANISED BY THE JAWATANKUASA BERSAMA HADIAH
SASTRA (JOINT COMMITTEE FOR LITERARY AWARDS) AT THE
LEE KONG CHIAN HALL, SINGAPORE COUNCIL OF SOCIAL SERVICE
BUILDING, ON SUNDAY, OCTOBER 12, 1975 AT 8 P.M.

I wish to congratulate you, members of your Committee and ASAS 50 for organising this presentation of literary awards.

This is a most welcome move to give encouragement, and recognition, to the works by Singapore writers which should command a wider audience.

Some would argue that, measured in units of time, we lack a literary tradition. On the other hand, Singapore writers have, during these 10 years, produced a body of works fairly substantial in number, considering the size of our population. The publications in poetry number 92, in plays 17, in novels 70, in short stories 23 and in literary magazines 41, taking publications in the four language together.

The use of only one language as a form of expression and a means of communication in a multi-lingual society may be a limiting factor to our writers in their reach for an audience on a national level. This is a unique problem and a challenge which our writers have to face. To a great extent, this may be overcome by translations of literary works from one language into another.

In the last decade, we have come across writers who have published continuously. For example, we have Miao Hsin who has written a dozen books and short stories in Chinese since 1951. We have Masuri who has produced, since the war, poems, short stories and novels in Malay. We have Goh Poh Seng whose recent novel in English has been translated into one foreign language. We have many other poets, novelists, short-story writers, writers in literary criticism, in all the four languages. This is, as you will appreciate, not the time and place to enumerate them all in detail.

Writers we2/-

Writers we have, and I trust that, given a little more time and better opportunities to publish, we would have our writers attaining greater heights and a body of literature widely recognised as national literature. Such would be works by writers drawing on their personal experiences and resources; of writers producing works in literature with facets of their immediate environments fused into their writings; writers having a keen interest in, and are conscious of, the needs and achievements of the society in which they live; poets, novelists and short-story writers who use local scenes as backdrops to dramatize their moods, thoughts and feelings and who are capable of fusing local elements into their own creative consciousness.

This evening you have deemed fit to present awards to recipients worthy of the recognition given to them for their contributions. I have much pleasure in being associated with these proceedings and I wish all the recipients every success in the future.

OCTOBER 12, 1975.
