

Indian Heritage Centre launches first book

Tiffany Fumiko Tay

The Indian Heritage Centre (IHC) has launched its first book.

It traces the cultural heritage of the Indian community in Singapore and casts light on its plight during the Japanese Occupation.

Entitled *Singapore Indian Heritage*, the 556-page publication combines academic research with catalogue entries of the centre's collection of over 300 artefacts, photographs and documents. The hard-cover tome comprises a series of essays and photos, and tells of the journey of Singapore's Indian community from pre-colonial times, its contributions to nation-building and its current-day dynamics.

It was edited by Associate Professor Rajesh Rai of the National University of Singapore and Professor A. Mani of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University in Japan.

Minister for Trade and Industry (Industry) S. Iswaran launched the book at the IHC yesterday.

Prof Rai said the Japanese Occupation is not often thought of in terms

of the Indian experience. While the Indian National Army (INA), formed by Indian nationalists in South-east Asia, forged an alliance with the Japanese in their fight against British rule, Indians also suffered at the hands of the Japanese.

Often overlooked, according to Prof Rai, are the large numbers of Indian labourers involved in Japanese projects, the prisoners-of-war who did not join the INA, and their fates.

Speaking at the event, Ambassador-at-large Gopinath Pillai, who is chairman of IHC's advisory board, said the book was a collaboration between "respected members of the academia and the centre's museum professionals". "The IHC is invested in the long-term study of Indian history and heritage in Singapore and the wider South-east Asia region," he said.

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- The book is available for \$53.50 at Museum Label shops at the Indian Heritage Centre, Asian Civilisations Museum, National Museum of Singapore and Malay Heritage Centre.