



Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat reading to children about the life of Singaporean scientist Chou Loke Ming at the launch of the Asian Scientist Junior Book Series, a children's book series featuring six scientists from Asia. ST PHOTO: KHALID BABA

Asian scientists take centre stage in new children's book series

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It was a Sunday morning filled with wonder as more than 150 young children learnt about marine biology and the life of Professor Chou Loke Ming, an adjunct research professor at the Tropical Marine Science Institute in the National University of Singapore.

Prof Chou, who has made saving the corals his life's passion, is one of six scientists from Asia whose stories are told in the Asian Scientist Junior Book Series. The launch of the series at My Tree House at the Central Public Library yesterday was attended by the guest of honour, Mr Heng Swee Keat, Minister for Finance and chairman of the National Research Foundation Singapore.

Prof Chou, who is the only Singaporean scientist to be featured in the series, was also present.

Mr Heng, who read the book about Prof Chou to the group of excited children, stopped often to engage them in questions and later invited the man himself to join him for a short conversation about marine life and the importance of saving Singapore's coral reefs.

Prof Chou, who brought along skeletons of coral reefs, the shell of a giant clam and a plushie tissue box cover in the shape of a sea slug, had the full attention of the children, who peppered him with questions, from his favourite sea creatures (sea slugs) to whether humpback whales have humps (they do not).

In his speech to children and parents, Mr Heng said: "Science, tech-

nology and innovation is where we have to invest to build Singapore's future. In this spirit, we must continue to inspire our children to be curious about science, understand its possibilities and make an impact using science."

The book series, which features the stories of other scientists from the region, including Chinese palaeontologist Chang Meemann and Indian space scientist Udupi Rao, was the result of a successful Kickstarter campaign run by science, technology, engineering and mathematics-focused media company Wildtype Media Group.

Wildtype Books published the book series after the campaign received \$16,000 through 128 backers.

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