
SUSS launches book prize worth \$30,000

Clement Yong

An annual \$30,000 book prize has been started to recognise local fiction and non-fiction works, the richest pot for a Singapore book award.

The inaugural Dr Alan HJ Chan Spirit of Singapore Book Prize is presented by the Singapore University of Social Sciences (SUSS) and was launched on Tuesday.

Established through a \$1 million donation by Confucian scholar Alan Chan, the prize aims to promote the writing of books that champion mindsets and values important to the shaping of Singapore.

In its statement, SUSS listed “equality, diversity, religious harmony, meritocracy, pragmatism, resilience and an emphasis on education, innovation and community” as examples of such values.

It added: “The purpose of (Dr Chan’s) gift for the Book Prize is to promote understanding and appreciation of the spirit of Singapore and the importance of social good in the making of Singapore society. The work could draw on our past, present and future directions for the development of our society and citizenry.”

The book must have a significant Singapore element in its narrative, and be written in English by a Singaporean or permanent resident.

For the 2023 award, eligible books must be issued by a publisher in 2021 or 2022 and available for sale or distribution. Self-published works are not accepted.

In comparison with this award, the Singapore Literature Prize given out by the Singapore Book Council comes with \$3,000 and a trophy.

The Epigram Books Fiction Prize, previously Singapore’s richest literary prize, was accompanied by a cash prize of \$25,000. It has been suspended for a year.

The selection panel for the Dr Alan HJ Chan Spirit of Singapore Book Prize comprises academics from SUSS and other autonomous universities, as well as writers, critics and publishers.

These include Professor Cheong Hee Kiat, president emeritus of SUSS; Mr Abdullah Tarmugi, permanent member of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights; Mrs Triena Ong, director of Etymology: International Book Publishing and Editorial Services; Mr Desmond Kon, Nanyang Technological University’s senior lecturer for creative writing and publishing; and Mr Gene Tan, chief librarian and creative director of the National Library Board.

The deadline for submissions is May 31. Interested authors and publishers can e-mail spiritofsingapore@suss.edu.sg for more details.