

Be bilingual and the world is your oyster

K JANARTHANAN

Singapore's bilingual policy and education give its citizens an edge in navigating the modern world while preserving their roots and heritage.

And with a strong foundation, the world will be our children's oyster, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Indraneel Rajah said at last Saturday's Most Inspiring Tamil Teacher's award ceremony.

In her speech before 200 teachers at the Umar Pulavar Tamil Language Centre, the Second Minister for Finance and National Development recalled the views of the late founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew.

"He said that while English connected us to the world and was needed for trade, our Mother Tongue languages gave us the means to tap the rich heritage that our culture offers," said Ms Indraneel.

She also said educators remain strongly rooted in core values in the face of uncertainties and continue to give



Lifetime Achievement awardee A Mallika with Minister Indraneel Rajah and Singapore Tamil Teachers' Association President Danapal Kumar.
PHOTO: MOE

their best in nurturing the coming generations – "just like how banyan trees stand strong and spread their canopy with aerial roots over a large piece of land".

Jointly organised by Tamil Murasu, the Singapore Tamil Teachers' Union and the Ministry of Education's Tamil Language Learning and Promotion Committee (TLLPC), the award has

been conferred on top-tier Tamil language educators since 2002.

Nine award recipients, including two for lifetime achievement and one for best trainee teacher, were honoured this year.

Primary school:

■ Ms Harunnisha Mohamed Jamaludeen,

44, Kuo Chuan Presbyterian Primary School

■ Ms Kayal Vili Pugalendi, 41, Zhangde Primary School

■ Ms Usha Krishnasamy, 44, North View Primary School

Secondary school:

■ Ms Azmed Beevi Abdul Kalam, 42, Serangoon Garden Secondary School

■ Ms Mageswari Salverraju, 41, Yishun Town Secondary School

■ Ms Shamini Raja Kumar, 44, Tampines Meridian Junior College

While Ms D. Priyadarisini won the NIE Best Tamil Teacher Trainee Award, Senior educators Anjappan Sinna Konar and A Mallika received the lifetime achievement awards.

Ms Mallika, who said she was moved and felt honoured, paid tribute to her father who inculcated in her strong moral values and a passion for the Tamil language.

➔ janark@sph.com.sg