

In meter and prose



IT WOULD not be a stretch to describe poet and literary critic Kirpal Singh (above) as a Singapore icon and a local literary giant.

Born to a Sikh father and a Scottish mother in 1949,

Dr Singh, who is currently an associate professor with the Singapore Management University, first attempted to write poetry in 1958. It was a poem about his teacher in Primary 2.

After his O levels, he wanted to join the army but was persuaded by his principal to carry on his education in Raffles Institution. That led to his first book – a collection of poems, essays, short stories and plays called Singapore Pot-pourri – being published while he was still studying for his A levels.

In 1972, while pursuing his degree at the National University of Singapore, he published his first anthology of poems called Articulations.

He has since authored 15 books and is now an internationally recognised scholar. Dr Singh was the first Asian director for the Commonwealth Writers' Prize and also the first Asian and non-American to be made a director on the American Creativity Association's board.

In an interview with the Professor of English and adviser of the University of Iowa's International Writing Program Peter Nazareth, found in the introduction of his book *The Best Of Kirpal Singh*, Dr Singh described his poetry as "basic politics".

"I write from a mission to educate the sensibility of those around me. To expand the consciousness, to just perhaps convince people that in this morass of humanity, what is lacking is a little kindness," he added.