

Hindu studies textbook well received by officials here

Author to map out training programme for 100 teachers



Mr Das

THE first textbook for the Hindu Studies Course has been written and Education Ministry officials as well as local Hindu experts are very pleased with it.

It was written by Mr Manoj Das, a professor from India, who is here for feedback on the book and to map out the training programme for about 100 teachers selected to teach the course.

Hindu Studies is one of the options in the compulsory religious studies programme which will be introduced to Secondary 3 students next year.

In an interview yesterday, Mr Das said it took extra care to write the book, which is in English, because the purpose of the course is "not to make a person religious but to make him a better man."

"There was no model since your government is the first to introduce this concept of religious education.

"I had to keep the

By HEDWIG ALFRED

Singapore environment in mind so that the ideas will not be alien to Hindu students here," he said.

Mr Das is a professor of English Literature and Indian Literature at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education in Pondicherry, southern India.

Short stories

He is best known as a writer of short stories and articles in English which have been published in magazines, journals and anthologies. He has also written several books for children.

"I pitched the textbook at the language level suited to the Secondary 3 student and as far as possible used a stories approach.

"Reaction to the book has been very good. Other experts have gone through the book and they feel that it will be suitable for

students here," he said.

The book has not been named but is tentatively called the Hindu Reader for 'O' Levels/Secondary 3.

Contents of the book include an account of Hinduism in South-east Asia, stories from the Hindu epics, Ramayana and Mahabharata as well as philosophies and the basic ideas behind Hinduism.

Since he was appointed consultant for the course, he has made several trips to Singapore and has held meetings with the First Deputy Prime Minister and Education Minister, Dr Goh Keng Swee, the Minister of State (Education), Dr Tay Eng Soon, officials from the Curriculum Development Institute of Singapore, the Hindu Advisory Board and members of the two committees set up for the Hindu Studies project.

He has also met students and teachers here to get a feel of how much knowledge they have of Hinduism and just where to start with the course.

Mr Das is now working on the guide-book for teachers.

"This is five or six times bulkier than the textbook because it has explanations, additional examples and stories, reference books and even a pronunciation guide for some names," he said.

Training

More than 100 teachers have been picked to teach the Hindu Studies course. They were selected by principals who met those interested in the programme, who had some knowledge of Hinduism and who were willing to undergo training for the course.

Mr Das arrived in Singapore on July 14 and will leave on Monday. He will return in November, with the guide-book and go through the textbook's contents with teachers.