

# Celebrating five decades of promoting Tamil

The National University of Singapore Tamil Language (NUS TLS) Society celebrated its 50th anniversary on May 17, reflecting on five decades of language promotion, student leadership and cultural innovation.

Guest-of-honour K. Shanmugam, Minister for Home Affairs and Law and NUS TLS alumnus, commended the society's contributions over the past five decades but also voiced concern about the future of Tamil in public life.

"We have to ask ourselves if, in 20 or 30 years, we'll still have ministers who can speak fluent Tamil on stage," he said, noting a broader decline in Tamil usage, even beyond Parliament.

Mr Shanmugam pointed out that many young people speak primarily English, a trend that affects not only Tamil but also other mother tongue languages such as Mandarin and Malay.

"We also need to ask ourselves whether Tamil can continue to be regarded as a respected language by those who do not speak it," he added.

He stressed the need to make Tamil accessible and engaging, even for non-speakers, and highlighted the importance of hearing the language in informal spaces beyond classrooms and community centres.

Calling on the next generation to take charge, he said: "To keep Tamil vibrant for the next 50 years, we

need young pioneers like you to lead the way."

Held at the Serangoon Gardens Country Club, the event brought together past and present members of the society, many of whom reunited after years.

The evening featured student performances and nostalgic recollections of landmark programmes that shaped Tamil cultural engagement on campus and beyond.

Founded in 1975 with only a handful of members, the society has since grown significantly, with the current 46th executive committee continuing its tradition of combining language advocacy with student-led community initiatives.

**Yogita Anbuchezhian**