

TAMIL NADU

A collection worth bowing to



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Going strong: Y. Abdul Rasul has been collecting stamps since he was 10 years old.

Abdul Rasul's trove of 5,915 mosque stamps sets a world record

Y. Abdul Rasul was one of many philatelists collecting whatever stamps came his way, till a chance meeting with Viswanatha Iyer, another philatelist, in 2005 paved the way for his entry into the Guinness Book of Records.

“He gave me his collection and advised me to focus on the theme of mosques and it has paid rich dividends,” recalls Mr. Rasul, a 41-year-old IT professional who has entered the Guinness Book of Records for the largest collection of 5,915 stamps featuring mosques.

Besides Viswanatha Iyer, who had a huge collection of stamps from Travancore, Balakrishna Das, president of the South Indian Philately Association, and Abdul Azeez, a Varanasi-based philatelist, also played a major role in Mr. Rasul achieving his feat.

Saudi Arabia and other Islamic countries release special stamps to mark the annual Haj pilgrimage and these stamps form a section of Mr. Rasul's collection.

The oldest stamp in his possession was released by the Afghanistan government in 1892. Mr. Rasul also has a rare stamp with inverted centre – printed upside down – released in Somalia in 1902. “Normally these stamps are immediately withdrawn. A few people, however, are able to get them and I obtained one,” said Mr. Rasul, who began collecting stamps when he was 10 years old.

Both his grandfather G. Abdul Rasul and father R. Yusuf were ex-servicemen. His grandfather saw action against the Japanese in the Second World War.

“When my father was working in the Middle East, he would write letters and I started collecting the stamps,” recalled Mr. Rasul who has stamps from 95 countries, many displayed on his interactive site www.mosquestamps.com.