

# NTU building and road renamed in honour of pioneers

Felicia Choo

A building and a road at Nanyang Technological University (NTU) have been given new names to mark pioneers' contributions to the development of Singapore's education system.

The building that houses the College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences has been named the Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan (SHHK) Building, while Nanyang Valley, a road adjacent to the Chinese Heritage Centre, will be renamed the Tan Lark Sye Walk.

A plaque to mark the renaming was unveiled during a ceremony at the building yesterday.

The event was attended by about 300 guests, including Education Minister Ong Ye Kung.

Speaking at the event, NTU president Subra Suresh said: "(The local communities') legacy should not be forgotten by future generations of Singaporeans, even as we revel in the progress that Singapore has made in her education journey, with two top-ranked universities that are among the world's best, and a strong research, innovation and education ecosystem."

The SHHK was established in 1840 and is one of the largest clan associations here.

In 1953, then chairman Tan Lark Sye, a prominent Chinese businessman and philanthropist, mooted the idea of establishing Nanyang University, or Nantah, to advance the nation's education and development.

In the 1950s, the SHHK donated 212ha of land in Jurong Road for the campus, while Mr Tan personally offered \$5million, eliciting more contributions from communities in Singapore and Malaya. Mr Tan also became the first chairman of the executive committee of Nanyang University, which was founded in 1955 and officially opened in 1958.

Nanyang Technological Institute was subsequently inaugurated on the same grounds in 1981 and merged with the National Institute of Education in 1991 to form NTU.

The SHHK Building and Tan Lark Sye Walk are next to the Chinese Heritage Centre.

The nearby Yunnan Garden is be-



The building that houses Nanyang Technological University's College of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences has been named the Singapore Hokkien Huay Kuan Building. PHOTOS: LIANHE ZAOBAO

ing refurbished and will become an educational and recreation hub for students and the public. It will open by the first quarter of next year.

At the Nanyang Alumni Awards in the evening, Senior Minister of State for Education Chee Hong Tat spoke about Nantah's beginnings and the role Mr Tan - who was deprived of his citizenship in 1964 for activities prejudicial to security and public order - played.

Mr Tan's call for the establishment of a new university to provide Chinese-educated students with a pathway to higher education and the efforts of the clan association elicited strong support, with Chinese people from all walks of life responding to the call for donations.



Alumni members taking photos yesterday at the newly renamed Tan Lark Sye Walk. Mr Tan Lark Sye had played a key role in setting up Nanyang University.

Mr Chee noted that Nantah went on to nurture 12,000 graduates in various fields, including many belonging to the Pioneer and Merdeka generations.

"The late Mr Tan Lark Sye, belonged to the strong tradition of philanthropy amongst community leaders in the pre-independence period. They include Mr Tan Kah Kee, Mr Lee Kong Chian and Mr Lien Ying Chow, who were successful in business and generously ploughed back their profits to benefit society," Mr Chee said.

"The Government had our differences with Mr Tan Lark Sye. It was one facet of a life and death struggle between the non-communists and the pro-communists over the fu-

ture of Singapore," he added.

"Because the non-communist side won, we have today's Singapore, and we have progressed from Third World to First."

Mr Chee said that the university has transformed in tandem with the nation, and more than five decades on, NTU is a comprehensive research university of strong international reputation.

"For many years, Chinese-educated Singaporeans would not have had the opportunity to access higher education if not for Nantah. We remain grateful to the contributions of the university and its graduates," he added.

feliciac@sph.com.sg