

Bursary fund for needy NTU dragon boaters included in digital time capsule to mark school's 30th anniversary



(From left) NTU alumnus Xie Jiaqi, Cathy and Victor Loh, NTU alumnus Alex Loh, and Celine Chee, part of the university team to help set up the fund. PHOTO: NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY

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SINGAPORE - After two of their former teammates lost their lives in the 2007 dragon boat tragedy in Cambodia, two Nanyang Technological University (NTU) alumni were motivated to set up a bursary to honour them.

Together with other alumni, pilot Alex Loh Kar Meng, 47, and Mr Xie Jiaqi, 38, the director of a wholesale food distribution company, rallied different groups of individuals and relayed the idea to the school.

Such a fund to help needy members of the NTU dragon boat team truly lived up to the dragon boat spirit of teamwork, they said.

The Poh Boon San and Stephen Loh Soon Ann NTU Dragon Boat Endowed Bursary Fund was launched in 2008, about a year after the accident.

Poh Boon San and Stephen Loh were among five members of the Singapore dragon boat team who died after their boat collided with a tugboat moored at a pontoon in Cambodia's Tonle Sap river and overturned.

Since its launch, the fund has helped at least two members of the NTU dragon boat team who require financial aid each year. They get \$4,000 each.

To date, 38 students have been assisted by the bursary, which was one of 30 key moments in NTU's history that was added to a digital time capsule to mark the university's 30th anniversary.

NTU on Thursday (Dec 9) also launched a public exhibition and book to celebrate the milestone.

Titled "Thirty Years of Momentum, 30 perspectives", the book shares insights and reflections from individuals who have been a part of NTU's journey, and highlights the school community's achievements.

Education Minister Chan Chun Sing, the event's guest-of-honour, noted that NTU only had five schools when it was established in 1991, teaching accountancy and business, applied science and the various engineering disciplines.

Today, NTU has expanded to five major colleges, 13 schools and five autonomous institutes, he said, and developed expertise in diverse fields including maritime studies, sports science and fine arts.

Moving forward, he urged the university to become a focal point and catalyst for the growth and development of the Jurong Innovation District (JID).

NTU's strengths in education, research, and innovation makes it well-positioned to anchor new industries like precision medicine in JID, he added.

Mr Chan said NTU should also serve as a hub for Southeast Asia's 600-million strong talent pool, and as a bridge for global connections.

The bursary for NTU dragon boaters is also featured in the exhibition at Nanyang Auditorium, which is open to the public from Thursday till mid-2022.

Mr Stephen Loh's parents Victor, 78, and Cathy, 73, said they were glad the bursary is part of the digital time capsule, and that their son's and Poh Boon San's legacy lives on. "We were in deep grief when the accident happened, but we hope for this bursary fund to help future generations excel in the sport."