

Universities play critical role in social compact: DPM Heng

They should not be ivory towers, but catalysts to create a better world, he says

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Universities like Nanyang Technological University (NTU) play a critical role in providing educational access to those who might otherwise not have the opportunity, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat said yesterday.

Over the years, NTU had taken in students from diverse backgrounds through bursaries and scholarships, and these helped to strengthen the social compact, he said.

Just as important, he added, was the role NTU students and alumni played in giving back to society.

In a video address at NTU's 30th anniversary dinner, Mr Heng said: "To each generation of NTU students and faculty, I urge you to continue to change our society and the



world for the better. Universities should not be ivory towers. They should instead be catalysts to create a better world."

Mr Heng added that NTU had made good progress over the past three decades as it now ranked among the top universities in the world.

"Looking ahead, the pace of change will be even faster and the waves of disruption much larger," said Mr Heng.

One of these waves is society – the need to forge a stronger social compact.

Said Mr Heng: "The social compact is under stress in many soci-

eties. Disparities are widening, and many communities feel excluded from progress. Singapore is in a better position, but we are not immune to some of these forces."

This was also highlighted by Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong earlier this week when he launched Forward Singapore, an

engagement exercise between the Government and Singaporeans to refresh the social compact and shape the country's future.

NTU president Subra Suresh announced yesterday that the university had raised more than \$1.1 million through its 30th anniversary celebration activities.

He was also speaking at the anniversary dinner at NTU's newest sports hall on campus, the Wave.

The monies – from more than 4,000 donors – were raised through NTU's We Belong campaign from Jan 22 to March 31, said the university in a statement.

The campaign comprised NTU Service Week, where about 600 volunteers worked with more than 30 community partners; Best Foot Forward, a virtual run that clocked 37,000km from 1,000 runners; and NTU Giving Day, which brought the entire university community together to celebrate the impact of giving and to support critical causes of the university.

The \$1.1 million will go towards financial aid for students as well as support for the university's colleges, schools and programmes, such as the NTU Priorities Fund, School Advancement Funds and the NTU Sustainability Fund.

The university kicked off its anniversary activities in September last year, which included the launches of a digital time capsule, a public exhibition and a limited-edition book.

Concluding his address, Prof Suresh said: "I urge all of you to reflect on the communities around you and what they mean to you. You build a community, and then it builds you. It nourishes you with friendships and purpose.

"This is how greatness is achieved – not by individual effort, but by the collective strength and cumulative impact of small victories – as demonstrated by the rich heritage and remarkable accomplishments of Nanyang Technological University."



NTU president Subra Suresh (fifth from far left), leading toasts during the university's 30th anniversary dinner yesterday. DPM Heng Swee Keat (above) delivered a video address.
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