

## Tan See Leng gives \$1m to support women pursuing Stem careers

Ang Qing

Women pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (Stem) will get a boost with a \$1 million gift from Manpower Minister Tan See Leng.

He said the endowment was inspired by knowing and working with many talented and capable women from fields such as medicine, pharmacy and chemical engineering, when announcing the personal contribution yesterday at Nanyang Technological University (NTU).

"Growing up, I had the privilege of being taught by many inspiring female teachers, and as a medical student, continued to be mentored and tutored by some of the finest minds who are accomplished women clinicians as well," added Dr Tan, who has more than 30 years of experience in the healthcare sector.

He launched the endowment to advance women in Stem careers at a forum commemorating the first anniversary of NTU's Promotion of Women in Engineering, Research and Science (Powers) programme, which aims to close the gender gap in these fields.

Named after Dr Tan's late father Tan Seow Chiap, the endowment will support scholarships worth up to \$50,000 annually for women pursuing Stem degrees at NTU. It will also help fund annual mentoring programmes by leading Stem experts for female undergraduates and an incubation programme awarding a \$1,000 grant.

Noting that several colleagues had asked why the endowment fund was named after his father instead of his mother, Dr Tan said gender equality is not a women's issue.

[SHIFTING MINDSETS continued on A2](#)

# Whole-of-society effort needed to shift mindsets on gender roles: Dr Tan

FROM A2

"For Singapore to become a truly fair and inclusive society, we require a whole-of-society effort to shift mindsets on gender roles, challenge biases and break barriers that limit women's potential and contributions," he said.

Speaking at the forum on challenges and solutions to close the gender gap in Stem fields, he said his desire to curb discrimination in any form, particularly against women, was shaped by his mother.

He said: "She was chronically sick and notwithstanding that, I think it was with a great perseverance (that) she continued to work part-time to try and provide for the family itself."

"I think that is, in a way, also guided by resolve and my determination to try to see how we can level the playing field for everyone."

Dr Tan is an only child, and in a previous interview with The Straits Times, said his mother sold Tupperware, gave tuition and baked cookies to sell at Chinese New Year to help support the family. His father was a bus timekeeper.

Previous donations by ministers

EVERYONE PLAYS A PART

**For Singapore to become a truly fair and inclusive society, we require a whole-of-society effort to shift mindsets on gender roles, challenge biases and break barriers that limit women's potential and contributions.**



**MANPOWER MINISTER TAN SEE LENG**, on how gender equality is not a women's issue.

in their personal capacity include Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's donation to charity of damages from defamation suits against individuals such as The Online Citizen editor Terry Xu.

Other panellists at the forum included representatives from tech-

nology giants Dell and HP.

Among them was chairman and managing director of ExxonMobil Asia Pacific Geraldine Chin, who said she had nearly missed out on a pivotal role in her career after giving birth to her first child because her well-intentioned bosses thought the job, which involved extensive travel, would be tough.

But before they made a decision without her opinion, a manager had suggested that she be consulted.

Ms Chin said: "Let's not assume that young mothers will not take up the challenge of a job that will take them away from home because each individual is different."

The forum comes after a Powers study published last month found that half of the women in the Stem industry believe it is harder to get a job and progress in their career due to their gender.

As part of efforts to address the issue, Powers yesterday launched a programme which will see female students mentored by experienced women professionals from HP Singapore over three months.

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Manpower Minister Tan See Leng (centre) speaking at the Powers forum at Nanyang Technological University yesterday. With him are (from left) moderator Geri Kan, head, communications, Asia markets, at HP; and panellists Associate Professor Sierin Lim, chair of Powers, NTU; Mr Andy Sim, vice-president and managing director, Singapore, of Dell Technologies; and Ms Geraldine Chin, chairman and managing director of ExxonMobil Asia Pacific. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG