

Honing talent was 'absolutely essential' to S'pore's progress, success, says late founding PM

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The late Mr Lee Kuan Yew was instrumental in the shaping and development of the country's higher education, particularly the university sector, said National University of Singapore (NUS) president Tan Chorh Chuan yesterday.

"He firmly believed that talent development was not just crucial, but absolutely essential for Singapore's progress and continued success, as people are Singapore's only resource," said Professor Tan during an NUS memorial ceremony in honour of the founding Prime Minister at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

Even though Singapore enjoyed sustained economic growth for several years, Prof Tan said in the late

Mr Lee pushed to constantly raise skills, develop talent

1970s, Mr Lee identified the need to raise skills training and talent development to a higher plane.

"He foresaw that the demand for more and better-trained graduates and professionals would continue to grow, a responsibility entrusted to the National University of Singapore, which was established in 1980."

Education was always one of Mr Lee's key concerns, said Prof Tan.

In 1966, a year after Singapore obtained independence, Mr Lee met school principals and pushed for the then-novel idea that every child should be developed to his or her full potential.

According to Prof Tan, Mr Lee said: "The ideal product is the student, the university graduate who is strong, ro-

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Prof Tan Chorh Chuan
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY
OF SINGAPORE
PRESIDENT

bust, rugged, with tremendous qualities of stamina, endurance, great intellectual discipline, and most importantly of all, humility and love for his community: A readiness to serve whether God or king or country or, if you like, just his community."

The memorial ceremony was attended by more than 1,000 NUS staff, students and alumni.

Mr Lee studied at NUS' predecessor institution, Raffles College, between 1940 and 1941, before his studies were interrupted by World War II.

Multiple prizes and awards for students in institutions of higher learning have been established over the years under Mr Lee's name, such as the Lee Kuan Yew Scholarship To Encourage

Upgrading Award (LKY-STEP).

Speaking to the media after delivering his eulogy, Prof Tan said Mr Lee had always been concerned with the talent pool in Singapore.

"It seems to be a recurrent and singular theme in a lot of his thinking and what he has done. What kind of talent does Singapore need? How do we develop that talent?" said Prof Tan.

Ms Koh Shi Min, 23, an LKY-STEP recipient who was at the ceremony, said she would not have been able to pay for her medical studies without the scholarship. Even though the third-year student at the NUS Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine has never met Mr Lee, she said she was thankful for the scholarship under his name.