

NUS awards doctorate to ESM Goh

Emeritus Senior Minister (ESM) Goh Chok Tong received the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from his alma mater, the National University of Singapore (NUS), yesterday.

He served as Singapore's second prime minister from 1990 to 2004. He has been ESM and senior adviser to the Monetary Authority of Singapore since May 2011.

Two others were given honorary degrees at the main NUS commencement ceremony yesterday.

Professor Saw Swee Hock was awarded an honorary Doctor of Letters for his contributions in the field of statistics and demography, as well as for his philanthropic work.

Sir Richard Brook Sykes was given the honorary Doctor of Science for his research work and achievements in biomedical sciences.

Speaking at the ceremony, ESM Goh, 74, recalled some key events that have shaped his life, from his father's death when he was 10 to his dream of getting a PhD being disrupted as the government would not transfer his bursary bond to the university, where he had signed on as a research fellow after graduation.

He started his civil service career in the Prime Minister's Office, and later unexpectedly joined politics.

"First, while you cannot predict your future, you have control over some parts. You can scan and prepare for the terrain ahead – the geopolitical environment, the global economic outlook, Singapore's demography, society's changing attitude, technology, political developments," he said. "Second, have a sense of duty – duty to family and country..."

He quipped: "You do not have to take the path of politics but please do if you are invited for tea sessions."