



Workers' Party chief Pritam Singh speaking to new graduates of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at NUS. TNP PHOTO: GIN TAY

Pritam Singh recalls struggling through school

WP chief: NS, NUS turning point in life

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Workers' Party chief Pritam Singh was not a straight-A student. For years, he struggled to cross each hurdle in the education system.

"I fumbled badly at the Primary School Leaving Examination, entering the Normal stream in secondary school, and really bumbled my way into junior college and university," he said at a commencement speech at National University of Singapore (NUS) yesterday.

Returning to his alma mater to speak to 470 new graduates of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, where he graduated from in 2000, he recalled that enrolling in the faculty felt to him like he had "hit the lottery".

But his experience at NUS and national service proved a turning point in his attitude towards education, he said, citing his positive military experience and exposure to political science and history.

He eventually won the Straits Steamship Prize in 1999, awarded to the top history and political science undergraduate of each cohort.

Mr Singh cited his educational journey to encourage his

audience, especially those who, like him, had not always done well academically.

"There may be some of you who felt like I did throughout the course of my educational journey before NUS, that feeling of 'I should have studied harder,'" said the Aljunied GRC MP.

Compared with better performing peers, they may find it harder to secure their ideal first job.

"But... when you are through that door, all bets are off. I hear this more and more at all workplaces – a degree is only as good as your work ethic, attitude and diligence," he said.

BENICE

He also counselled the better performers not to let their degrees speak for them, but to continue the relentless drive towards excellence.

"And as you climb the ladder of success, be nice to people along the way. Because you may meet the same people on the way down," said Mr Singh.

He was invited by the university to address the graduates – a rare appearance for an opposition politician at a commencement ceremony.

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