

# Pritam on fate, luck and other factors for success after uni

## He also urges Yale-NUS College's graduating students to turn pandemic to their advantage

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Leader of the Opposition Pritam Singh told Yale-NUS College's graduating students that fate and luck had a hand in him becoming the Workers' Party (WP) leader and head of the opposition in Parliament.

Speaking at the Class of 2021's virtual commencement ceremony on Monday, he said "kismet, fate, destiny, the luck of the draw or just plain life" often influences success, and that the opportunities and obstacles faced will be unpredictable.

"Your success depends on things which you have no control over, such as whether you get a good boss who cares about your development or a poor boss who cares only

how useful you are as a cog in the machine," he added.

Of his own life, he said: "I did not plan to be secretary-general of the Workers' Party, nor did I scheme and plot my way to be Leader of the Opposition. Neither was it my life's goal to be sued jointly and severally for \$33 million."

Mr Singh was referring to the lawsuit taken out by the Aljunied-Hougang Town Council against him and other WP leaders over \$33 million in improper payments.

The High Court ruled in 2019 that former WP chief Low Thia Khiang and party chair Sylvia Lim breached their fiduciary duties, and Mr Singh breached his duty of skill and care. The MPs appealed. The case is before the apex court.

Mr Singh said: "I have taken it as it comes and I intend to, as the

cliche goes, keep calm and carry on. I encourage you to do so, too."

Mr Singh was elected an MP for Aljunied GRC in 2011, succeeded Mr Low as WP chief in 2018, and was appointed Leader of the Opposition last year after his party won 10 seats at the general election.

In a speech tinged with humour, the 44-year-old said he was "old enough to have gained some wisdom but yet young enough to enjoy health, vitality and the energy to get things done".

"I am grateful to be here today to speak to you, because after this, it's all downhill. While I am at the apex of my hereafter declining powers, let me share what I think are the four things that will determine your success after university."

Besides luck, Mr Singh told the students, the "kampung of experience" that they gained through the liberal arts education at Yale-NUS would serve them well.

Mr Singh, who graduated with an arts degree from the National Uni-

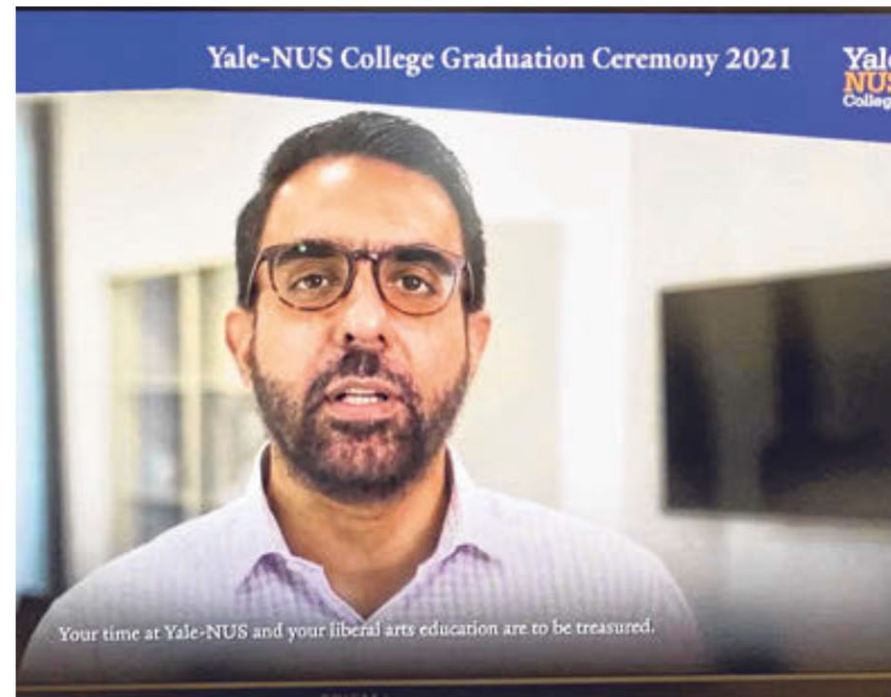


PHOTO: PRITAM SINGH/FACEBOOK

KEEP CALM AND CARRY ON

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**MR PRITAM SINGH**, Leader of the Opposition, to Yale-NUS College's graduating students.

versity of Singapore, said majoring in history helped him understand people better and grow as a person. He also has a master's in war studies from King's College Lon-

don, and a law degree from Singapore Management University.

Noting that he was "forever grateful" for how things turned out, he said: "Would I have taken law as

my first degree if I had attained better A-level results? Perhaps. But this has also showed me how perceived failures in life can eventually enrich and reward."

He also told the students that their personal relationships will be a ballast in their lives, and friends and family who speak the truth will help them distinguish between being righteous and being self-righteous. He added that he was fortunate to have had that in his life.

Lastly, a good attitude and being adaptable would help them go far.

Mr Singh advised the graduating students to always listen, and to avoid being difficult: "Disavow being self-centred and selfish, and avoid having as your real purpose the climbing of the greasy pole. It's slippery for a reason. Everyone can see through such a person."

He said they would have to define success for themselves, and urged them not to resent graduating during the pandemic, but to turn it into their advantage.

In a Facebook post, he also said he had been looking forward to congratulating them in person, but that Covid-19, particularly the B1617 variant behind Singapore's recent spike in cases, had "determined that it was not meant to be".

"Even so, we make the best of what we have and play the game with the cards in our hands, and not the ones we wished we had. Better an online ceremony than none," he added. "Still, no reason not to pat yourself on the back for a job well done and to look forward to a new dawn that awaits tomorrow. Congratulations once again!"

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