



President Halimah Yacob with Professor Reini Wirahadikusumah (left) from Indonesia's Bandung Institute of Technology and National University of Singapore (NUS) president Tan Eng Chye on Thursday at a dinner marking 10 years of the Temasek Foundation-NUS Programme for Leadership in University Management. PHOTO: MCI

# Key for Asean universities to maintain ties: President

## Cooperation, transformation in higher education can help develop communities

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In an increasingly competitive world, the value of maintaining collaborative and tight-knit Asean community ties cannot be understated, President Halimah Yacob told university leaders from the region on Thursday.

Speaking at a gala dinner to close a programme for Asean university

leaders, she said that Singapore's relationship with its neighbours has always been a major priority, with continual efforts being made to strengthen these bonds.

"The development of our Asean community through cooperation in higher education is one such way, and the gathering of our esteemed Asean university leaders through Plum is one such opportunity," she said.

Plum, or Programme for Leader-

ship in University Management, is a collaboration by Temasek Foundation and the National University of Singapore (NUS) to allow Asean university leaders to bolster ties, exchange insights and advance ideas on governing and managing universities in South-east Asia.

The dinner, held at the Asian Civilisations Museum, marked the 10th anniversary of Plum.

It was held on the last day of a three-day summit attended by about 50 university leaders from 24 universities across South-east Asia.

The leaders had gathered to discuss issues related to transforma-

tion in higher education, innovation and entrepreneurship, and sustainability efforts in Asean.

The President added that universities must transform to educate students and communities broadly, so that all may lead productive lives. Amid the innovation and transformation, universities must also remember that development must progress sustainably for the long run.

She said: "As members of the higher education fraternity, we should continue to inculcate a mindset of sustainability through our curricula, research, campuses, cultures and communities."

In his speech, NUS president Tan Eng Chye said he was delighted with the sense of commitment and purpose clearly evident among Asean university leaders in tackling the challenges of the present and future.

Professor Tan said the discussions – on topics such as delivering increased social impact for communities, fostering innovation and entrepreneurship, and prioritising sustainability efforts on campuses – would help to build a constructive and future-focused framework.

On Tuesday, at the start of the summit, Education Minister Chan Chun Sing spoke about the role of universities as a "brain trust" to create a neutral and trusted platform for discussing challenges and formulating new ideas.

Building strategic trust across different countries must start in the universities, he said.

Mr Chan said he hoped that through the summit, the university leaders would establish both bilateral ties and multilateral ties to significantly step up interactions among their undergraduates, post-graduates and faculties.

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