

Tembusu College Dinner
31 August 2011

Salutations

1 The Provost of NUS, Prof Tan Eng Chye, the Vice-Provost, Prof Tan Tai Yong, Professor and Mrs Prasenjit Duara; Prof Greg Clancey, Fellows, Graduate Fellows, Resident Assistants and students of Tembusu College.

2 My wife and I are very pleased to join you on this happy occasion, the first formal dinner of Tembusu College.

Year of Elections

3 2011 will always be remembered as the Year of Elections. On 7 May, Singapore held a general election which has been described as a watershed election. Three months later, on 27 August, Singapore held the Presidential election to elect its 7th President. Tembusu College recently held an election to elect the College's student committee, the house captains and the wing leaders. The Master has told me that the elections went smoothly and there were no requests for a recount. I congratulate all those elected. I am glad that the College has instituted student government. I support the Master's request to the students to draft a code of conduct. The code should reflect our values, ethics and ethos.

Biodiversity and the Halls' Names

4 The students of Tembusu live in five halls. I was very pleased to learn that our students decided to name the halls after five endangered species of Asian animals, namely, the elephant or Gaja, the red panda or Ponya, the crane or Tancho, the Komodo dragon or Ora, and the snow leopard or Shan. The loss of biodiversity and climate change are the two greatest environmental challenges we face. Nineteen years ago, I had the honour to chair the Earth Summit which adopted the UN Convention on Biodiversity. In October 2010, the UN invited me to deliver the Third Linnaeus Lecture in Nagoya. I am the patron of the Elephant Parade in Singapore. In November this year, over 100 life-size baby elephants, decorated by artists, designers and celebrities, such as President S R

Nathan, will be displayed all over Singapore. I am very pleased that two of the elephants will be here. The elephants will be auctioned in January next year to raise funds to conserve the Asian elephants in its natural habitat.

Most International College

5 I am also very pleased to learn from the Master that our College is the most international college at NUS. We have fellows and students from 37 countries. This is wonderful and we should celebrate our diversity. I propose three ideas for your consideration. First, we should celebrate the national day of all the countries represented in our College. Second, every foreign student should have a buddy. Third, every foreign student should have a host family.

My Ambition for Tembusu College

6 Let me conclude by sharing with you my ambition for Tembusu College. Let us strive to make this the best college of NUS. What do I mean by “the best college”? I mean:

- (a) the college with the happiest students;
- (b) the college with the most international, inclusive and harmonious student body; and
- (c) the college with the richest collegiate life, intellectually, socially and culturally.

7 Thank you very much.

Tommy Koh
Rector
Tembusu College