

25 AUG 1989

Singapore Government

PRESS RELEASE

Information Division, Ministry of Communications & Information, 36th Storey, PSA Building, 460 Alexandra Road, Singapore 0511. Tel: 2799794/5.

89-wkw-6

Release No. 20/AUG
01-1/89/08/05

SPEECH BY PRESIDENT WEE KIM WEE
AT THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF EUSOFF HALL,
NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE
ON SATURDAY, 5 AUGUST 1989 AT 4 PM

I am very happy to be here today to celebrate with you this very special event, the opening of Eusoff Hall. It must be even more special for those of you whose association with Eusoff College goes back into the past.

As citizens of a young nation just come of age, we can be excused for reflecting upon our achievements and the progress we have made. In Eusoff Hall's case, you can justly be proud of 30 years of tradition, not including the year past since you occupied these new premises.

I am informed that the Eusoff Spirit is typified by fellowship and camaraderie, marked by energy, vitality and dynamism. Any hall of residence, if it is to raise itself above the ordinary, must be more than a set of subsidised accommodation for students. Having seen the beautifully landscaped grounds, excellent and comfortable facilities for recreation and living, I agree that "subsidised accommodation" is hardly the term for Eusoff Hall.

The special and distinctive character of a Hall is, of course, more than the sum of its physical attributes. It is something that only the residents, past and present, with help and guidance from the Master and his team of academic mentors, can give it. You must work hard to create an ideal environment for young ambitions and intellects to flower, where their social, emotional as well as intellectual needs can be given fullest expression.

Residential halls on campus are microcosms of the University population. It has often been said that the juxtaposition of different disciplines, represented by students who hail from the whole spectrum of faculties, is a good aid to broadening intellectual horizons. Indeed the Hall must actively foster cross-disciplinary exchanges among its residents. In the increasingly complex world of today, an ability to relate to others in a variety of disciplines is a clear advantage in problem-solving.

The student-mix not only cuts across faculties, but also years of admission. Having seniors around is beneficial to freshmen, who find everything a little strange at first. Some may require counselling before they adjust and settle down to a healthy regime of study and community living, balancing academic assignments and the inevitable social obligations that are part and parcel of residential living. Halls of residence also admit foreign students, who provide useful and enlightening contacts with the outside world.

Speaking of the "outside world" I need hardly remind you that since the inception of Eusoff College 31 years ago, Singapore has become a global city in more ways than one. People from more than 100 countries visit Singapore for business and recreation. Singaporeans are now urged to go abroad and compete for contract work and pit their skills and talents in foreign lands. Multi-national competition is razor-sharp. We are not the only ones who aspire to succeed and progress. In the open arena of the business world Singapore must be represented by the best. Even the second-best may not be adequate.

The skills and the knowledge you have acquired in the University will be tested to the fullest extent in the free-for-all competition. You will need that little "extra

something" that is not provided in your textbooks and lecture rooms to give you the final polish to be ready to take on the strongest rivals. That "extra something" can be found and acquired from participation in the numerous activities in your Hall, bits and pieces here and there, and, as I said earlier, in the opportunities to mix with foreign students in your midst. If you can feel comfortable and "at home" in a hall of residence on the campus I am confident you will have less problems working and venturing in foreign lands, if you have to.

One more point on the same note I would like to touch upon concerns our internal problem. Singapore is a multi-racial as well as a secular state. Better sooner than later, you should all learn to live, work and play on a multi-racial and multi-religious basis, which calls for tolerance, patience and understanding of the compatriots all around you.

Only five years ago, Eusoff was a women-only hostel. Though Eusoff Hall continues the tradition of Eusoff College with only a change in name, the college still functions as an off-campus hostel at Bukit Timah. I read with interest some of the early reports of the College's founding in 1958. Being named after a man, an illustrious personage in the late Dr Haji Mohamed Eusoff, a former Pro-Chancellor of the then University of Malaya in Singapore, it was a source of some bemusement. The Malayan Undergrad student newspaper carried vivid stories of the battle of the sexes played out on campus between residents of Raffles Hall and the College.

I am assured that as times have changed, Eusoff Hall has also moved on to keep in step. You have a newly-designed crest and an anthem very much in keeping with your new-found identity. Nothing speaks so clearly of your sense

of purpose and direction than the decision to discard the old College motto, "Aspire, Pursue, Achieve", and to adopt a new one: "Excellence and Harmony".

I wish you all in Eusoff Hall every success as you reach for excellence in all your endeavours and work towards greater harmony among your fellow men and women. I have now great pleasure in declaring open Eusoff Hall.
