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**SPEECH BY DR TONY TAN KENG YAM, GUEST-OF-HONOUR, AT
ALUMNI COMPLEX GROUNDBREAKING CEREMONY, KENT
RIDGE GUILD HOUSE HELD ON MONDAY, 8 MAY 2006 AT 4 PM**

Mr Wong Ngit Liong
Chairman, NUS Board of Trustees

Professor Shih Choon Fong
President, NUS

Dr Shaw Vee Meng
Chairman, Shaw Foundation

Mr Chandra Mohan K Nair
President NUSS

Mr Lai Kim Seng
Chairperson of Alumni Complex Project Committee

Distinguished Guests

Ladies and Gentlemen

I am indeed very happy to be here this afternoon to officiate today's
Groundbreaking Ceremony for the Alumni Complex.

I have a long association with NUS.

I enrolled as an undergraduate in 1959 in the Faculty of Science studying
Physics.

I graduated in 1962, and did higher studies at MIT and the University of
Adelaide.

In 1967, I joined the then University of Singapore as a Lecturer in Mathematics, after obtaining my PhD.

After two years in 1969, I left the University to join OCBC and later the Government.

In 1980, I returned to the University now called the National University of Singapore as Vice-Chancellor to oversee the merger of the University of Singapore and Nanyang University.

I served for a year before handing over the Vice-Chancellorship to Professor Lim Pin.

For the last twenty five years, I have been associated with NUS in various capacities – Minister-in-Charge of the Universities, Chairman of the Universities' Grants Council from 1992 to 1995, and then overseeing the Universities until last year when I stepped down from the Cabinet.

Today as Chairman of the International Academic Advisory Panel, I still keep a keen interest in NUS development.

It was therefore without hesitation that when I was invited to officiate today's Groundbreaking Ceremony, I accepted immediately.

This is a landmark occasion for NUS and for its Alumni.

The Alumni Complex is a joint project between NUS and NUSS.

It bears testimony to the important role which Alumni plays in all universities, particularly in NUS which, although celebrating its Centennial last year, is still relatively young by the standards of other universities.

Universities are enduring institutions, some being able to trace their history over many hundreds of years.

A university has many stakeholders – faculty, students, alumni, management and well-wishers.

Increasingly Alumni are playing a major role in the university.

Alumni are called upon to give back to the university after benefiting from the education which they have received.

In doing so, they help enhance the status of the university.

I am happy that in recent years, NUS has strengthened its links with Alumni through the Alumni Relations Office.

In the 1980s, when we were studying how our universities could strengthen ties with their alumni, we were puzzled as to how American universities were able to build strong links with their Alumni.

I led a number of university officials to visit American universities to see how they were able to achieve such results.

We found that they were running a very sophisticated operation, sending newsletters, keeping alumni informed, hosting Chapters in various part of the world and making sure that their faculty members also were involved in keeping touch with alumni.

So in a sense, once you have graduated from an American university, you are a member of the university for life.

NUS keeps in touch with its 160,000 alumni including some 14,000 overseas alumni across the globe in a variety of ways.

NUS has 43 local alumni groups that are either Faculty, Interest or Hall-based. In addition, NUS has 13 overseas alumni chapters in strategic cities from different parts of the world.

The annual Homecoming and reunions have also been positive platforms to engage alumni.

Leveraging on IT, NUS has an active cyber community of about 60,000 of which some 25% are using its complimentary email services, a clear testimony of alumni's willingness to be identified with NUS.

NUS also publishes the magazine – The AlumNUS – which is circulated to all our alumni.

Alumni have a stake in the success of the university.

You feel that even though you may have graduated many years ago, you are still part of the university.

You share in the university's progress.

NUS and the other universities in Singapore will have to work to encourage this sense of loyalty and affection for the university which is at the centre of strong alumni relations.

The Alumni Complex is a step in this direction.

It is a home on campus for past and present graduates.

The Alumni Complex is a physical embodiment of NUS and NUSS' common aspiration for its graduates to retain their links with the university.

The Alumni Complex will provide Alumni with a sense of place.

It will reflect the historical part of NUS and its predecessor institutions.

The Complex will be a gathering centre for Alumni across generations and campuses.

Above all, the Alumni Complex will be a warm, welcoming home on campus, encouraging Alumni to return to their roots.

The Alumni Complex needs to be more than bricks and mortar.

It must be about heartware – relationship building, warm memories and enduring ties of friendship.

Ultimately, a university is about people.

Students spend several years on campus.

As alumni, they have a lifelong relationship with their alma mater.

I commend NUS for making significant strides in building bonds with alumni and well-wishers that transcend space and time.

Dr Shaw Vee Meng exemplifies a long-term friend and benefactor of NUS who has strongly supported the University in its efforts to realize its vision.

In this connection, I would like to recognize the generous donation of \$10 million by the Shaw Foundation to the Alumni Complex.

I wish to recognize the gift of \$5 million from the NUS Society to this project.

I am touched by the response of alumni from all walks of life in contributing to the success of this Project.

To date, almost 2,000 alumni have made contributions big and small to the building of this Complex.

With your support, this home-away-from-home for all NUS alumni has become reality.

My congratulations to NUS, NUSS and the Alumni Complex Project Committee on this happy occasion.

I wish the Complex, NUS and NUSS every success.
