

OPENING ADDRESS BY NUSS PRESIDENT MR EDWARD S TAY
AT THE CELEBRATORY DINNER 2023
16 NOVEMBER 2023, THURSDAY, 7PM
KENT RIDGE GUILD HOUSE, DELLA & SENG GEE GUILD HALL

Professor Tan Thiam Soon, PJG and all NUSS members who are recipients of the 2023 National Day Awards,

NUSS Distinguished Member designates

The Honourable Justice Andrew Phang Boon Leong and Professor Kishore Mahbubani,

NUSS Outstanding Member designates

Mr Lai Kim Seng, Mr Joseph Ng and Mr Yeo Keng Joon,

NUSS Honorary Member, Professor Wang Gangwu

Other NUSS Past Presidents, Mr S. Rajendran, Mr Anwarul Haque, Mr Lim Soo Hwee, Mr Johnny Tan and Mr Eddie Lee

Fellow NUSS Members, Ladies and Gentlemen

Introduction

Good evening. Tonight, we are gathered here for a double joy. Firstly, we celebrate the National Day Awards awarded to our NUSS Members. Secondly, we will confer the NUSS Distinguished Member Awards and NUSS Outstanding Awards to five of our fellow members.

National Day Awards

The National Day Awards are Singapore's way of recognising various forms of merit and service to Singapore.

Since 2009, we have organised this dinner annually to celebrate with our members who have received the awards. This year, we are holding this event for the second time. Earlier this year, we held a celebratory dinner for the recipients of the COVID-19 National Awards.

On National Day in 2023, 60 of our members received a National Day Award. Heading this list are Madam Kay Kuok who received the Distinguished Service Order (DUBC), and Mr Quek See Tiat and Professor Tan Thiam Soon who both received the Meritorious Service Medal (PJG). We are happy that Professor Tan Thiam Soon is here with us today. Thiam Soon is, of course known to many of us – before he left to helm the Singapore Institute of Technology as its President, he was Vice Provost of Education here at the National University of Singapore.

On behalf of NUSS, I congratulate all the National Day Award Recipients.

Distinguished and Outstanding Member Awards

Since 2010, we have also been awarding the Distinguished and Outstanding Member Awards to our members. These accolades aim to celebrate individuals who have made enduring and impactful contributions to NUSS, NUS, and the wider community.

This year, we have a bumper crop of five recipients. Our two distinguished member designates are of course well known to us. Justice Andrew Phang has just retired as Vice President of the Court of Appeal and is now a Senior Judge of the Supreme Court. Professor Kishore Mahbubani is, and may well forever be, the only Singaporean who has served as the President of the United Nations Security Council. He was also Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs prior to that.

Our outstanding member designates include my predecessor, Mr Lai Kim Seng as well as Mr Joseph Ng and Mr Yeo Keng Joon.

More will be said about these members when their citations are delivered.

Conclusion

It is heartening to witness the growing number of NUSS members who have gone above and beyond to contribute to public service, NUSS and the community.

On behalf of NUSS, that I extend our heartfelt congratulations to each and every one of these outstanding individuals. Your acts of service and contribution have made a positive impact on the lives of many. May these achievements serve as an inspiration for the rest of us to emulate your example and make our best contributions to our community.

Thank you, and enjoy the rest of the evening!

Citation for Professor Kishore Mahbubani, recipient of NUS Distinguished Member Award

Delivered by Mr Soh Yi Da

Professor Kishore Mahbubani is a familiar face to all of us here. Presently a Distinguished Fellow at the Asia Research Institute (ARI), National University of Singapore (NUS), Prof Kishore is well known for his stellar career that spans across diplomacy and academia. He is also prolific writer and public intellectual who has spoken and charmed many corners of the world.

In diplomacy, Prof Mahbubani served the Singapore Foreign Service for 33 years (1971 to 2004). He had postings in Cambodia, Malaysia, Washington DC and New York, where he twice was Singapore's Ambassador to the UN and served as President of the UN Security Council in January 2001 and May 2002. He was Permanent Secretary at the Foreign Ministry from 1993 to 1998. As a result of his excellent performance in his diplomatic career, he was conferred the Public Administration Medal (Gold) by the Singapore Government in 1998. Prof Mahbubani joined academia in 2004, when he was appointed the Founding Dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy (LKY School), NUS. He was Dean from 2004 to 2017, and a Professor in the Practice of Public Policy from 2006 to 2019. In April 2019, he was elected as an honorary international member to the illustrious American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Prof Mahbubani was awarded the President's Scholarship in 1967. One of our most illustrious NUS alumni, Prof Mahbubani graduated with a First Class Honours degree in Philosophy from the University of Singapore in 1971. From Dalhousie University, Canada, he received a Master's degree in Philosophy in 1976 and an honorary doctorate in 1995. He spent a year as a fellow at the Center for International Affairs at Harvard University from 1991 to 1992.

Prof Mahbubani has achieved several "firsts" in his two careers. He was the Founding Dean of the LKY School, the founding Director of the Civil Service College, the first Singapore Ambassador to serve on the UN Security Council, the first Singaporean to publish articles in globally renowned journals and newspapers like *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, the *New York Times* and the *Financial Times* and co-authored articles with distinguished global thought

leaders like Kofi Annan, Klaus Schwab and Larry Summers. He has also been a prolific author, having published eight books: *Can Asians Think?*, *Beyond The Age Of Innocence*, *The New Asian Hemisphere*, *The Great Convergence*, *Can Singapore Survive*, *The ASEAN Miracle* (co-authored with Jeffery Sng), *Has the West Lost It?* and *Has China Won?*.

Prof Mahbubani has received significant international recognition for his many accomplishments. The Foreign Policy Association Medal was awarded to him in New York in June 2004 with the following opening words in the citation: "A gifted diplomat, a student of history and philosophy, a provocative writer and an intuitive thinker". He was listed as one of the top 100 public intellectuals in the world by *Foreign Policy* and *Prospect* magazines in September 2005, and included in the March 2009 *Financial Times* List of Top 50 individuals who would shape the debate on the future of capitalism. He was selected as one of Foreign Policy's Top Global Thinkers in 2010 and 2011. In 2011, he was described as "the muse of the Asian century". He was selected by *Prospect* magazine as one of the top 50 world thinkers for 2014.

Prof Mahbubani is one of Singapore's finest diplomats, scholar and leading public intellectual. NUSS is proud and privileged to present Prof Kishore Mahbubani with the NUSS Distinguished Member Award. The award underscores our warm friendship, deep appreciation for his support for NUSS, and in recognition for his inspiring leadership and contributions to the University community, to Singapore, and the international community.

Citation for Justice Andrew Phang, recipient of NUSS Distinguished Member Award

Delivered by Mr Sonny Yuen

Good evening, President of NUSS, Mr Edward Tay, Management Committee, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

Legal giant, legend, certified genius, deep thinker, legal historian.

Tonight, we come together to celebrate and rejoice in honouring Justice Phang, who has been conferred with the esteemed NUSS Distinguished Member Award.

Andrew has consistently displayed unwavering commitment and devotion, not only to the legal profession but also to the higher ideal of advancing the development of Singapore law. All of this emanates from a profound respect for everything he engages with – the law, individuals irrespective of their status, and society as a whole.

My initial encounter with Andrew dates back to his role as a Resident Fellow at Raffles Hall in 1984. During our interactions, I was struck by his profound thinking and his penchant for posing thought-provoking questions. He remained remarkably humble and readily engaged with us, the students. A Senior Counsel, Francis Xavier once said this, “Andrew would always pause and speak to you from his heart about things that really mattered in life”.

Andrew’s legal career is rich in history and filled with significant milestones. After he graduated from NUS in 1982 with Bachelor of Laws degree, he dedicated his next 18 years at NUS Law Faculty as an academic. During that period, he obtained his Masters and Doctorate in law from Harvard University. His expertise in contract law made him Singapore's foremost scholar in the field, and he was appointed a Professor of Law at NUS in 1999. The following year he joined the newly established Singapore Management University (SMU) and was appointed the Chair of the Department of Law at the SMU Business School in 2001.

While he was still in SMU, a significant milestone occurred. Andrew was appointed Senior Counsel in 2004. This was the first time in Singapore's legal history that an academic was conferred the title despite not making any application. The late Chief Justice Yong cited Andrew's "outstanding contributions to legal knowledge" as the compelling reason behind this exceptional honour.

In another momentous event in 2006, he became the youngest individual ever appointed as a Judge of Appeal, all at the youthful age of 48. Notably, this remarkable achievement transpired just two months after his initial appointment as a Judge.

Andrew has more than 260 academic publications and approximately 400 judgments spanning all areas of the law. This makes it 20 judgments a year, for 17 years. It is therefore indisputable that he is certainly one of the most influential legal luminaries in Singapore's history. In the lingo of the millennials today, I believe he is qualified to be called an "influencer".

Some of Andrew's works are ground breaking. One stood out in particular, a book called *The Development of Singapore Law* published in 1990. A painstakingly researched work that set Singapore's legal system more attuned towards the needs of our society instead of following English law as it is.

In recognition of his immense contributions to the legal profession, he was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal (Pingat Jasa Gemilang) in August 2022.

As they say, a light concealed is a light wasted.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Andrew for illuminating our lives with his brilliance as a jurist, judge, teacher, and mentor, all in service of our community. We thank you for showing us what it means to live our lives with a purpose and to do it exceptionally well.

Citation for Mr Lai Kim Seng, recipient of NUSS Outstanding Member Award

Delivered by Prof James Boss (Dr)

It is my great pleasure to deliver this citation for my good friend, Mr Lai Kim Seng.

Kim Seng has been a peerless steward of the Society for over two decades.

He graduated from the then University of Singapore with a Masters in Systems Engineering, having earlier obtained his first degrees in Engineering and Science from the University of Melbourne.

Throughout his years of service in the NUSS Management Committee between 1995 and 2017, he has served the Society in several key responsibilities including the Vice President, the Honorary General Secretary, the Honorary Treasurer and Chairperson of the Finance Subcommittee.

Between 2001 and 2005, he served with distinction as the President of the Society.

Throughout his tenure in the NUSS Management Committee, Kim Seng has also provided distinguished leadership to the Society in numerous key strategic projects. In 2004, he chaired the Society's 50th Anniversary Celebrations and among the several highlights were the successful staging of the Society's fund raising musical operetta "The Merry Widow" co-produced with Singapore Lyric Opera, the production of the 50th anniversary yearbook and with the support of the then Patron of the Anniversary Celebrations, President S R Nathan, NUSS collaborated with NUS and all the Singapore golf clubs set a Guinness Record for the most golf balls teed off simultaneously at a golf event (by the way the record remains unchallenged).

Between 2004 and 2012, he served as Chairperson of the Alumni Complex Project Committee and successfully steered the Society's collaboration with NUS in the joint redevelopment of the Kent Ridge Guild House and the construction of the Shaw Foundation Alumni House. More

recently, as Chairperson of the Active Ageing and Lifelong Learning Sub-Committee, Kim Seng oversaw the development of a new programme to provide lifelong learning courses for NUSS members and the community.

Besides the Alumni Complex Project collaboration with NUS, Kim Seng also served on the NUS Alumni Advisory Board from 2006 to 2012 as well as the NUS Centennial Campaign Advisory Board in 2005. NUS recognised Kim Seng's contributions with the NUS Distinguished Alumni Service Award in 2007.

Beyond NUSS, Kim Seng has been actively serving the community. He was conferred the Pingat Bakti Masyarakat Medal (PBM) in 2005 for his contributions in the education sector as Chairman of the School Advisory Committee, Springfield Secondary School from 1992- 2007. He also served in the grassroots as a member of the Bukit Timah Citizens' Consultative Committee from 2010 to 2014 and a volunteer with the Bukit Timah Meet-the-People sessions for about a decade.

Indeed, there are few other NUSS members who could compare to Kim Seng's record of dedicated and consistent service and contributions to NUSS in the past three decades. He remains a role model of servant-leadership, active citizenry, and lifelong learning for all NUSS members.

The National University of Singapore Society is pleased to confer on Mr Lai Kim Seng the Outstanding Member Award.

Citation for Mr Joseph Ng, recipient of NUSS Outstanding Member Award

Delivered by Mr Vincent Rasa Benedict

It is with immense pleasure that I extend my heartfelt congratulations to Mr Joseph Ng, a distinguished individual, and an esteemed member of NUSS whose remarkable contributions and exemplary leadership have earned him the well-deserved accolade of NUSS Outstanding Member for the year 2023.

His journey with NUSS has been marked by exceptional dedication and leadership, particularly in his role as the Golf Convenor since 2013, where he has overseen the dynamic growth of the largest sports section within the Society, boasting a membership exceeding 700 enthusiasts.

One of Joseph's notable achievements lies in his adept organisation of regular golf games and substantial overseas trips, events that go beyond mere sportsmanship and serve as a cornerstone for fostering camaraderie within the NUSS community. The magnitude of his influence is most evident in the success of major excursions to Turkey in 2018, Portugal in 2019, and Japan in 2023. Each of these endeavours attracted significant participant numbers, underscoring his exceptional ability to engage and unite members across diverse backgrounds and interests.

Beyond his role as Golf Convenor, Joseph has proven to be a philanthropist at heart, chairing and spearheading successful fundraising campaigns through various golf charities. His altruistic spirit has left an indelible mark, with notable contributions including fundraising for UTown Development in 2011, the NUS Alumni Bursary Fund in 2013, 2014, and 2015, the Prof Tan Chorh Chuan Bursary Fund in 2018, and a particularly commendable effort during the challenging times of the pandemic in 2022. In this period, he directed funds towards the NUS Alumni Bursary Fund, Dover Park Hospice, and Children Wishing Well, reflecting not only his adaptability but also his deep commitment to supporting the community during times of crisis.

Joseph's professional background as an engineer in building and facilities has proven invaluable to NUSS, as he generously volunteered his expertise in various capacities. Actively participating in the Society Future Facility Task Force, the Suntec and Mandalay Guild Houses Project Committee, and the NUSS 60th Anniversary Dinner Organising Committee, Joseph has showcased a diverse skill set and an unwavering commitment to the continual improvement and success of NUSS.

However, his commitment to community service extends far beyond the confines of NUSS. His rich history of voluntary involvement includes pivotal roles such as Chairman of the Hong Kah J Zone Residents Committee, member of the Hong Kah Citizen Consultative Committee, contributions to the Jurong Town Council, and active participation in the Bukit Panjang CCMC from 1998 to 1999. Presently, his role as the Choral Conductor at the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Succour stands as a testament to his enduring commitment to community and service.

Joseph's outstanding contributions and unwavering commitment to NUSS and the wider community make him an exceptionally deserving recipient of the NUSS Outstanding Members 2023 award. His legacy of leadership, philanthropy, and community service serves as an inspiration to us all, embodying the core values and spirit of NUSS.

Citation for Mr Yeo Keng Joon, recipient of NUSS Outstanding Member Award

Delivered by Mr Eddie Lee

It gives me immense joy to present this citation for my fellow esteemed member of NUSS, Mr Yeo Keng Joon.

Keng Joon graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from the University of Malaya in 1973 and continued his pursuit of knowledge earning an MBA in Marketing from the National University of Singapore in 1985. His academic foundation, coupled with his steadfast commitment to community service, has been nothing short of commendable.

Beyond his academic and professional endeavours, Keng Joon's dedication to giving back to educational institutions is truly praiseworthy. Serving selflessly in various alumni associations, including his role as the Founding President of NUS Business School Alumni Association and well as an inaugural member of the NUS Alumni Advisory Board, he has contributed significantly to the growth and development of these institutions.

His profound commitment to uplifting others, rooted in his humble beginnings, exemplifies a legacy marked by selflessness and transformative impact. Having personally experienced the challenges of a modest background, where financial aid paved the way for his education, he harbours a deep empathy for the struggles faced by needy students.

In 2006, a desire to honour his son's wedding led to the creation of the NUS Business School Alumni Association (NUSBSA) Bursary Fund. From a modest \$25,000 donation, Keng Joon rallied support, turning it into a perpetual initiative that offers financial assistance to students indefinitely. As the Founding President of NUSBSA, Keng Joon spearheaded fundraising efforts, raising millions for the Bursary Fund.

His influence extends further as a member of the Alumni Student Advancement Committee, where he has raised substantial amounts for needy students through golf charities. Notably, he

initiated the Campus Couples Bursary, attracting support from prominent figures such as former Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong.

A recipient of numerous awards and honours, including the Alumni Special Service Award and Distinguished Alumni Services Award, his dedication is not confined to NUSS and NUS. His philanthropic endeavours extend to initiatives such as the Singapore Poly Graduate Guild Bursary Fund, where through his initiation and numerous generous contributions the fund has surpassed five million dollars, leaving an enduring mark of kindness and compassion.

Beyond financial contributions, Keng Joon also served as Co-Chairman of STARTUP@Singapore and the Co-chairman of DBS NUS Social Venture Challenge where he dedicated his efforts to nurturing entrepreneurship among the youths in Singapore.

In his unwavering support for the education and well-being of others, Keng Joon exemplifies a leader and philanthropist whose impact resonates far beyond the confines of his own success. His story is one of compassion, generosity, and a relentless pursuit of making a positive difference in the lives of those he touches.

Congratulations Keng Joon on being honoured with the NUSS Outstanding Member Award.