



## Remembering Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik A Towering Malaysian

### Contents

Vice Chancellor's voice  
Gerakan President and  
WOU Pro-Chancellor  
Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon  
shares his memories of Tun 2

in the limelight  
Datuk Lim Si Pin speaks  
about his father  
The doctor turned federal minister 3

Remembering  
Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik  
A Trusted Partner  
by Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap 4

Revisiting Tun's role in WOU's creation  
by Dato' Seri Chia Kwang Chye 5

Remembering Tun:  
Imagining And Establishing  
A Truly Open University  
by Tan Sri Emeritus Prof  
Gajraj Dhanarajan 6-9

Members of The Former  
WOU Council Remember  
Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik 10-11

Reflections 12

The passing of WOU's Chancellor Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik on 22 December 2012 was a tragic day for the WOU community which lost its founding father and untiring ambassador. The genesis and evolution of WOU would not have been possible without Tun LKY's great vision and determination to make affordable, tertiary education available to all Malaysians. This issue of *WawasanLink* looks back at the life of this towering Malaysian and his exceptional contributions.

It was only fitting that over 500 people attended the special memorial tribute on 20 January 2013 for the late Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik, the second Chancellor of WOU and a former President of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia. As a mark of respect, the tribute began with a minute's silence in remembrance of a great leader.

WOU Vice Chancellor Prof Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye began the proceedings and observed that Tun

Dr Lim will always be remembered as the founder of WOU for having the vision to set up a virtual open university, and subsequently bringing in key people and the funds needed to translate that vision into reality.

"He was determined to make higher education more readily accessible and affordable to more Malaysians. He wanted to add value to the lives of working Malaysians by offering them an opportunity to obtain a higher degree or qualification, irrespective of gender, race, religion and socio-economic background. His approach was to make the 'pie' bigger rather than forcing the population to fight for a smaller piece of the pie," added Prof Ho.

He shared that Tun Dr Lim wanted WOU to become self-supporting within 10 years and that the University is trying its best to meet this target. Prof Ho continued that the late Chancellor "made it

very clear from the beginning that although the Wawasan Education Foundation (WEF) and Parti Gerakan own the University, neither the Party nor the Foundation will interfere with the day-to-day operations of the University especially with regard to academic affairs".

After touching speeches from family members and close associates a video presentation was played, highlighting moments from Tun Dr Lim's public life with notable sound bites from his speeches, ending with a duet of *Only You* with his wife, which brought many in the audience to tears.

At the end of the moving tribute, a painting of the late Tun Dr Lim as WOU Chancellor was unveiled together with a plaque to commemorate the renaming of Dewan Wawasan in Menara PGRM, Kuala Lumpur as Dewan Wawasan Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik.

cont. page 2



In this very special issue of *WawasanLink* we pay tribute to a true Malaysian - the late Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik who was the Founder and second Chancellor of Wawasan Open University (WOU). We do so in a spirit of commemoration and of celebration. Commemoration because the vivid light that was the life of the late Tun Dr Lim has been extinguished, and celebration because his life had such lasting significance for not only all of us in WOU but for the public at large as well. Indeed Malaysians owe a great deal to the late Tun Dr Lim who occupied public office for over 30 years. Never was a job better or more faithfully served. He brought to the job intelligence, integrity, energy, a clear and practical sense of direction and an unwavering commitment to what he believed to be a wider public interest.

We at WOU feel deeply the loss and the void with the passing of Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik last December. We will miss our respected Founder and Chancellor who even in his last days was still thinking and talking about the welfare and future development of the University. We will miss his presence at our meetings and functions, his jokes, his speeches which were often laced with humour and interesting anecdotes and his frank, outspoken remarks. He was never hesitant in speaking his mind freely without fear or favour, about issues and situations that he considered not right. He had the right to do so really, since his wisdom, track record, credibility, motives, work ethics, as well as his high standing in society, accorded him this freedom and latitude.

Tun Dr Lim often reminded us that no person wishing to learn at a higher level should be denied the opportunity because of lack of money. Hence the scholarship support that WOU provides today in the form of the Chancellor's Merit Scholarship and new student Study Grant is meant to benefit deserving students who may otherwise be denied this opportunity.

WOU has made higher education as affordable as possible while maintaining high quality at the same time, for Tun Dr Lim wanted the University to be reputable not only for the number of graduates it produces each year, but more importantly for the quality of education it imparts to them.

Indeed Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik lived a purposeful and meaningful life. He was the inspiration and the driving force behind the University. We have all been impacted by the wisdom and deeds of this true Malaysian. We are eternally grateful to him.

As Vice Chancellor, I take comfort in the knowledge that many amongst us in WOU are prepared to carry that vision forward. We shall take with us the work ethics, tenacity and dedication that Tun Dr Lim exemplified, and carry on with renewed spirit, zeal and commitment to further realise his vision and set mission for WOU. His deeds and legacy will endure and continue to reverberate for years to come. Our memory of him will live on.

“Tun Dr Lim often reminded us that no person wishing to learn at a higher level should be denied the opportunity because of lack of money.”

**Professor Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye**  
Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer



Family of the late Tun at the tribute event.



Observing a minute of silence for the late leader.



Gerakan  
President  
and WOU  
Pro-Chancellor

## Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon *shares his memories of Tun*

"I actually first met Tun Keng Yaik when I was still a university student in mid-1972. I was captivated by Tun Keng Yaik's enthusiasm, energy and engaging style in talking about the need for political reform in Malaysia. Indeed this same reformist spirit provided the steam that drove him for more than 40 years after that, until the end of his life.

He was a selfless and no-nonsense leader and words are not enough to describe the sense of loss, sorrow, but at the same time, gratitude, felt by the Party, University and the country. We were given a true Malaysian, a great leader with a big heart. It is important that we emulate Tun Dr Lim's spirit of sacrifice, spirit of commitment and his spirit of working for the people."

## Editorial Board

- Editor** Rasidah Mion  
Corporate Communications Manager
- Copy Editor** Rosalind Chua
- Members** Professor Dato' Dr Ho Sinn Chye  
Vice Chancellor of Wawasan Open University
- Dr S Nagarajan  
Acting Dean, School of Foundation and Liberal Studies
- Ishan Abeywardena  
Senior Lecturer, School of Science and Technology
- Editorial Team** Selva Suppiah, Teoh Soo Ling
- Proofreader** Fan Kok Keong
- Photographers** David Lee, Boey Hein Lee

KDN Permit: PP 14958/11/2012 (031535)  
Published by Wawasan Open University  
Printed by Thunder Print Sdn Bhd  
No 6463, Lorong Ayam Didik 3, Taman Ria Jaya Light Industrial Park,  
08000 Sungai Petani, Kedah.





## Datuk Lim Si Pin *speaks* about his father

"In his formative years, he was sent out to a boarding school called St Michael's. But he was always very disciplined. His eldest brother was his mentor at school. Fearing his eldest brother, he always did what he was told. Unfortunately at the age of 12, his mother died at a young age, so he had to fend for himself. He wasn't a brilliant student, he always told me, but I feel he was smart, he was diligent, but most important, he was a very analytical person. And he always had the memory of an elephant. Throughout his secondary years, he always worked very hard because he knew he wanted to help people. Belfast was always his destination to study medicine.

It's because of his own personal history, that he felt that something to that effect needed to be built. When he was studying as a medical student in Belfast, my grandfather had to send him 30 Pounds every month for him to continue his studies. The 30 Pounds would cater for his tuition, as well as his living and accommodation expenses. In the beginning, my grandfather was doing quite well in his business, he was a miner, but towards the end of his career, he was doing very badly. So money was always short, because he had 16 children, and my dad being one of the eldest, would never get his 30 Pounds on time. When it was late, he was always screwed, because he had nothing to eat, and he always had to tell the landlord, 'sorry cannot, my money is still on the way.'

But we understood that, because of this, it left an indelible mark on him and he understood the importance of making education affordable to the masses. He carried this dream for many, many years, until WOU was established.

I think my dad had very high hopes for Dr Koh, that's why he insisted that Dr Koh be made a Pro-Chancellor of the University. My father's last wish was for WEF and WOU to work together not for gain, but for the good of the Malaysian people."



## The doctor *turned* federal minister



During Tun Dr Lim's illustrious years in public service he was MP for Beruas, Minister of Primary Industries, Minister of Energy, Water and Communications as well as national president of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia.

The native Perakian attended St Michael's Institution in Ipoh before graduating with a degree in medicine from Queen's University of Belfast in 1964. His easy-going bedside manner made him very popular among his patients and his down-to-earth approach served him well when he eventually entered local politics. His meteoric rise through the party ranks culminated with his election to the position of president of Gerakan in 1980, a position he held until his retirement in 2007.

Tun Dr Lim has been conferred numerous awards and honours in recognition of his distinguished and dedicated service to the community and the nation. The Perak Government bestowed upon him the DPCM (which carried the title Dato') in 1981. He was also conferred the SPMP by the Perak Government in 1989, the DGPN by the Penang Government in 1997, the SSAP by the Pahang Government in 2006 and PNBS from the Sarawak Government in 2009. All these awards carry the title 'Dato Seri'. Tun Dr Lim was conferred the Seri Setia Mahkota Malaysia (SSM) award which carries the title 'Tun' by the DYMM Yang di-Pertuan Agong on 7 June 2008.

His contributions have also been recognised by academia and in 1999 he was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree by his alma mater Queen's University of Belfast, and an Honorary Doctor of Philosophy degree by the Information and Communications University, South Korea in 2004. On 9 May 2011, he was appointed as WOU's second Chancellor, a position he held right up until his passing.

As a minister, Tun Dr Lim was widely respected for his forthright and outspoken opinions; never a man to mince his words he was a press favourite with his rapid fire comebacks. A strong believer in finding common ground and bridging differences, he believed that the future of the nation depends on, "Building on our commonalities and not on our differences."





# Remembering Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik A Trusted Partner

By Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap,

Chairman of the  
Wawasan Education Foundation (WEF)

The late Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik was so much bigger than life, that I, regretfully with my limited vision, cannot do justice. I therefore limit my thoughts to the brief period of a decade when I was privileged to work with him for a common social cause, for which we both shared a great passion, to benefit the working people of this country.

The Tun Lim that I came to know and respect was one who carried with him a humanity borne out of his training as a physician, and a pragmatism borne out of a political conviction that diversity in strength requires nurturing and supporting equal social provisions for all in a multicultural and multiracial society. He epitomised the hallmarks of a good, caring but hardnosed political leader

Sharing a light moment at the WOU Groundbreaking ceremony in 2006.



In action at the Groundbreaking event.



Official Opening of the WOU main campus in January 2008.

who fought hard for the causes he believed in. I am thankful that he came to the notice of the Yeap Chor Ee's Endowment that led to the most important undertaking of my late grandfather's wishes by myself and my family.

It was towards the tail end of the year 2000 and early 2001 that Tun Lim and I were brought together by none other than the former Secretary-General of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia, Dato' Seri Chia Kwang Chye. This led us, from a slow beginning when the Gerakan Education Foundation (GEF) bought a 51% share of Disted-Stamford College in which the Residuary and Charitable Trusts set up by my late grandfather Towkay Yeap Chor Ee had a majority interest. The Trustees of the Trust got completely caught up by the enthusiasm and energy that the late Tun brought to the relationship that we became willing partners to an even bigger dream of creating a bigger Foundation that would serve the aspirations of the GEF and the obligations of the YCE Trust – the result was the establishment of the Wawasan Education Foundation, which subsequently led to the commissioning of Wawasan Open University.

It is not difficult to be swayed by Tun Lim's persuasive arguments to support a cause which he buys in and gets passionate about. From the moment when he bought and sold the idea of a merger between Gerakan Education Foundation and Yeap Chor Ee's Endowment to his colleagues, he was relentless in the pursuit of this association. Between us we spent months in the

Attorney-General's office and the Penang High Courts to obtain a vesting order to transfer all YCE Endowment Trust assets and funds to the newly created WEF. We had also spent months in our office and latter part of the evenings in Homestead with Dato' Dr Sharom Ahmat and Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon strategising the application processes. I had complete faith and trust that Tun would accomplish all that he promised to deliver through the WEF. He did.

It was mostly his efforts in persuading the Government of Malaysia under Prime Minister Tun Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, that WEF succeeded in getting approval for the establishment of WOU. He also persuaded political allies, business and industry associates as well as social connections to donate generously to 'his' university.

I have often asked myself in my reflective moments what made me agree to Tun's proposition of giving up my family home, where Irene my wife, my six daughters and I had lived for so many years. I believed in him and his undertaking to create a university for all Malaysians. I believed in his capacity to move mountains to achieve the goal of a truly Open University when he invited Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan to set up and run the University. I believed in him when he said that 'his' university would be free of political control while wishing for his party to be recognised for its role in creating a magnificent university. I believed in him when he declared to Malaysians that his university would be truly open, self sustainable, professionally run and committed to the highest quality in achieving academic standing. I believed in those who stood

in witness to these undertakings – honest and honourable men like Dato' Seri Kerk Choo Ting, Dato' Seri Chia Kwang Chye, Datuk Ng Chiang Chin, Dr Sharom Ahmat and Tun Dr LKY himself who were Founder Members and Directors of GEF before it was transformed into WEF. Twelve years from the time we met, the late Tun stood by his words and undertakings and delivered everything he said he would. Tenacity, true grit, honesty, passion and faith are the hallmarks of a true Malaysian whom one Prime Minister described as 'someone brutally honest'. He was someone who earned your trust. To those of us to whom he has trusted with his legacy – the University – we have a responsibility to our community to honour him by keeping faith to the trust.

I hope we have the character and strength to continue the work that the late Tun began, with the same vision, and to be relevant to an ever-changing Malaysian society that needs to be transformed from the present to a future of higher income, higher standards of living and most important of all a caring and compassionate society.



Second WOU Convocation Ceremony in 2011.



*Dato' Seri Chia (2nd from right) with Tun Dr Lim as they arrive for the WOU groundbreaking ceremony*



*Then Information Minister Dato' Seri Chia officially opens the Kuala Lumpur Regional Centre in 2007.*



*Dato' Seri Chia at launch of 'Road to Dawn' DVDs in 2008.*

**By Dato' Seri Chia Kwang Chye,** member of WEF, Vice President of Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia

"I remember that one of the three major projects of the Gerakan Education Bureau, then headed by Dato' Seri Kerk Choo Ting, was to set up the Gerakan Education Foundation (GEF). The original founders of GEF were the four major party office bearers, president Lim Keng Yaik, deputy president Dato' Seri Kerk, myself as secretary-general, and treasurer Datuk Ng. The GEF was later renamed WEF and incorporated with the Yeap Chor Ee Trust Fund. We appointed Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap as Chairman, and subsequently added more members to WEF.

WEF's main responsibility was to raise funds for educational purposes, and one of its major expenditures is WOU.

Tun Lim, in his speech in 1999, mentioned that Gerakan would embark on a project to set up a virtual university. So it all started from there.

In the process of setting up what would become WOU, I contacted Dr Raj, the foremost academic in distance education, to prepare a working paper to set up a virtual university. Dr Raj prepared a very comprehensive proposal for an open, virtual university - Open Virtual University Malaysia (OVUM) - and established a working committee.

But before the setting up of WOU, we - Tun, myself, Dr Raj, Dato' Seri Kerk, Dato' Seri Stephen - actually first got involved on another educational project - DISTED-Stamford College - following an informal meeting in January 2000.

After a workshop in Kuala Lumpur, we seriously worked towards setting up the new open university. Tun Lim Keng Yaik, Kerk, myself, Datuk Ng and the architect went to Hong Kong to visit the Open University, and also Sukhothai in Thailand. Tun Lim also went by himself to the

Indira Gandhi National Open University and the Open University in the UK.

Tun Lim was the person who provided lots of push and the vision, the bulk of the fundraising was accomplished by him and through his contacts. He was very committed and doggedly persistent in achieving his objective; sometimes he was quite intense. He knew exactly what needed to be done, in terms of getting the right people to support it, the right donors to come in, the right stakeholders and players. But most importantly he provided the leadership, bringing everybody together to achieve the single objective of setting up WOU. That's where his strength lay."



# Remembering Tun: Imagining And Establishing A Truly Open University

By Tan Sri Emeritus Prof Gajaraj Dhanarajan

Founding Vice Chancellor of Wawasan Open University, and Incumbent Chairman of the University's Board of Governors.

It is not often one sees a politician relating to the needs of the common man in a meaningful and tangible way. The late Tun LKY was such a man. His passion to better the lot of the working person, through education, was a tangible expression of a desire to help Malaysian society move out of the middle income trap and move up the economic ladder. His passing away on 22 December 2012, expected as it was, nevertheless sent waves of anxiety throughout the WOU community. LKY was the anchor on which the Wawasan Open University was tethered to; his loss will be hard on this University that he imagined.

I first met Dato' Seri Dr Lim in mid 2001 when he invited me for a conversation arranged through a mutual contact Dato' Seri Chia Kwang Chye. My first impression was a man who, unlike many other political leaders in this country, was sharp, suffered no fools, had a vision what this nation can be and should do to benefit from its enormous resources and people, how his party [the PGRM] can be a catalyst for good governance and political practice as well as the role of politicians like him in building a strong and vibrant civil society. I did not sense someone who carried with him the baggage of chauvinism and bigotry, though at times he sounded like one when meeting with the traditional media. He also shared with me his ideas as to how, at a practical level, he could help enhance the capacities of civil society through education, especially to eliminate or at the least reduce levels of inequities in the country. He seemed, then, to place a lot of hope in education, especially higher education, as a sure fire way of empowering individuals to become upwardly mobile, economically and socially.

Not wanting to beat around the bush he wanted to know from me, if I would give up my job as an international civil servant, living in Canada, to help him in his journey. He was not in a position to pay me an international salary, he said, but he would throw his full weight behind the project. He was persuasive and pushed all the right buttons about social good, supporting young people, helping civil society and contributing to national development. Despite my reservations about working with politicians on a social cause, I indicated my willingness to consider his invitation with some conditions, and compensation was not one of these. My requirements were simple and very much a part of the global good practice of higher education viz: sufficient start-up funds to support the University for at least ten years, non-interference from politicians and



political parties in academic and administrative matters, self-governing and most importantly academic autonomy. Tun did not disagree with my requirements – "sponsored by Parti Gerakan Rakyat Malaysia but managed by educators" became one of his favourite phrases when describing the relationship between WOU and PGRM.

In 1999, Tun informed his party members at the National Delegates Conference that PGRM would establish an open virtual university. It was clear from his speech that he had in mind or imagined a university that would be accessible to Malaysians of all ages at an affordable cost

through flexible pathways of learning. Accessible, Flexible and Affordable became his second set of frequently used phrases describing his University and in response to his social calling, the University, once established, adopted the tagline 'the people's university' which became his third favourite phrase with reference to the University. With the three phrases he invited me to design his University.



Receiving Tun Dr Lim Chong Eu (left) and planting a tree (right) at the WOU Groundbreaking ceremony in January 2006.



Imagining a university during the first half of the first decade, without government aid and financed purely on philanthropy was not the easiest of tasks. Tun had the confidence that he would raise the necessary money (RM160 million to subsidise the University on a diminishing basis for ten years) through the Wawasan Education Fund, acquire a campus through his partners the Yeap Chor Ee Endowment which was being looked after by a scion of the family, Dato' Seri Stephen Yeap Leong Huat, and finally faith in the professionals that he invited to join him to design the University.

International debate of the role, purpose, mission and structure of a university at the start of the new millennium was not necessarily encouraging. The debate was about corporatisation and privatisation of universities, commodifying of learning, ranking of universities, making universities centres of commercial innovation and research incubators. Clearly educational philosophers, planners and policy makers were divided between those who wanted to maintain the purity of universities as centres of intellectual discourse and debate, and others who saw them as cost and profit, centres, return on investment and/or hubs to balance trade deficits. Without being caught up in endless debate I saw our challenge as creating a university that would excel in teaching and provide learning for those who somehow found themselves marginalised from higher education in a most efficient and effective manner and fully self-supporting within ten years. The purpose was to serve this nation where higher education attainments were far below neighbouring high-income countries.

The suggestion, therefore, was made to Tun that given his Foundation's leaning towards flexible access, equity and limited funding desiring to have a wider reach, he should consider establishing a truly open university. Ever curious Tun wanted to know more about open universities and visits were arranged for him to visit three open universities, in the UK, India and Hong Kong. All subscribed to the very ideals that Tun espoused and yet were financed differently and managed effectively. Tun was a fast learner; his return from those visits effectively sealed his determination - a wish to see his University as a truly open one. He articulated in a blunt, clear and unambiguous way these views in an address delivered in 2006 as follows:



WOU Inaugural Convocation in 2010.



Official launch of WOU in 2006 by then Minister of Higher Education.



The former WOU Council in 2010.





Speaking at the official launch of WOU in September 2006.



Viewing work in progress in 2007.



Site inspection in 2006.



Preparing to chair a Press Conference in 2008.

“ .....

**WE SHALL HAVE A UNIVERSITY:** Where our academics will excel at both creating an exciting learning environment for their adult learners while contributing to community and national development by pursuing research, recognising that there are no boundaries which separate the three endeavours: Good research informs good teaching, and good teaching informs good research.

**WE SHALL HAVE A UNIVERSITY:** Where adult learners begin their engagement with the university, from the very first day of their studies, in search of their real interests, enhancing their strengths and pursuing their aspirations. By helping students discover who they are and what really interests them, we as a university can help them realise their full potential. We will encourage our learners to be independent and collaborative learners. We need to assist them in their journey to reinvent themselves as lifelong learners. Through the learning products we create, the learner support systems we emplace and through the technology backbone we will build no student should feel neglected or isolated from this university wherever they might be located. We must create a comprehensive learning experience with these goals in mind.

**WE SHALL HAVE A UNIVERSITY:** Where students interact with full-time faculty and part-time tutors early and often: through advising, mentoring and participation in online discussion groups and face-to-face seminars, and short courses. All these will become hallmarks of the WOU learning environment and experience.

**WE SHALL HAVE A UNIVERSITY:** Where diversity, global awareness, and computer and Internet literacy will represent the norm and not the exception. We shall continuously increase the diversity of our student body and our faculty; and, equally important, we will ensure that our students experience the diverse cultures of our country through mutually respectful interactions.

**WE SHALL HAVE A UNIVERSITY:** Which shall integrate technology across all disciplines and throughout the campus. We shall infuse technology and information fluency into all aspects of our students' learning experience.

**WE SHALL HAVE A UNIVERSITY:** That provides an education based upon the premise - and the fact - that most people today change not just jobs but even careers two, three and more times during their lives. Indeed, possibly as many as half of our students will end up working in careers that do not even exist today. If we just train people for "a job," we are not a real university. If we prepare our students for just one career, we are not preparing them for the future.

**WE SHALL HAVE A UNIVERSITY:** That will dedicate to being a community resource for the economic development of the region. We shall strive to be receptive to the industrial and business community of our country through the ways we conceptualise and deliver our curriculum and even better at using the resources of our communities to strengthen our services to our students.

**WE SHALL HAVE A UNIVERSITY:** Which moves away from measuring student success in terms of credits and grades and focuses far more on their development as compassionate, creative, and cultured human beings well prepared to live in a technologically sophisticated, ethnically diverse, and economically interdependent world? ”

.....

LKY SEPTEMBER 2006





Second WOU Convocation in 2011.



Leaving the hall after his installation as Chancellor in 2011.



Congratulating Dato' Seri Chet Singh (right) on his Honorary Degree during the 3rd Convocation Ceremony on 24 November 2012.

As imagined by Tun we set about designing the Wawasan Open University. As an open learning advocate I feared that the radical proposition of establishing a truly open university (when there was already one open university in the country which enjoyed the goodwill of the government in many ways) would not gain much traction amongst Malaysian policy makers. My reservations were unfounded. Strategic thinking, tenacity, tact and toughness were qualities that Tun possessed in abundance. He took his proposals for a 'truly open university' to the Ministry of Education first and subsequently to the Ministry of Higher Education. In a letter he wrote to a Cabinet colleague, he passionately put his case:

“As many of you know I have been, over the past few years, engaged in discussions at various levels of government as well as with component parties of the Barisan to establish a truly open university for the working women and men of our country who may not have had the opportunity to pursue higher education for a variety of reasons. The university we had in mind was one that is without walls of any kind. It should be a godsend to the millions of workers who have to upgrade their skills and knowledge to remain competitive and employed in knowledge and globalised economy. Some six million Malaysian workers out of a force of 9 million today have less than an SPM qualification. These people can be expected to remain in the workforce for another twenty or twenty five years. If they do not reskill and upgrade their knowledge base they will end up in the dust heap like many before them, as our economy continues to move up the value chain in production and services. We do not want and we cannot afford this wastage of our citizens.

It is this concern that made me seek on behalf of the working people of this country, a new kind of University which is accessible to all, affordable to the working person, available for study at anytime and any place, flexible in the way curriculum is delivered, relevant to the needs of the workplace and one that, most importantly respects, the working man as a learner. I am not an academic and as a working man I am inclined to perceive a University College as somewhat inferior to a University. I am certain that like me the thousands workers who are the potential students, will also be thinking likewise. As someone who has an enormous respect for the working person I am honour bound to send an appeal to my friend the Hon. Minister of Higher Education to revisit the invitation that he sent me. Grant us our wish to have an OPEN UNIVERSITY that is truly open and which will serve the nation and its people. With your support we hope to have the first cohort of workers as students by the end of 2006.”

There was resistance but he did battle with one Minister, outmanoeuvred a second, gained the respect of the third and won the confidence of the then Prime Minister, getting his wish finally for his University. The University opened for students in late 2006 and began delivering its first set of 11 courses to 721 students spread mostly in the urban conurbations of this country.

Tun was invited to chair the first Council of the University – a Council made up of a cross-section of Malaysians from all ethnic groups, and coming from the professions, civil service, academia, business and industry and civil society. In many ways the liberal in Tun manifested itself in the choice of Council members (and with no party hacks within it). In Council he was loud but kind, clever and funny, ingenious and shrewd, demanding while supporting the executive. He kept his eye on the ball and the ball for him was mostly about the finances of the University. He left all academic decisions to the Senate and the members of Council. Many will know that in his briefcase he always carried with him two documents relating to the University. The first was on the University's ten-year plan and the second its financial requirements for the year. Tun was not a bean counter but he had bean counters advising him on the state of the Foundation's finances and he in turn through soft persuasion ensured that the executive clearly understood

the financial challenges inherent to organisations subsidised by charity with the full backing of his Council. He took on the task of mobilising finances single-handedly, seriously, quietly and successfully. He did not get all the RM160 million we needed but we got close enough.

Today the Wawasan Open University remains a way in which Malaysians from all walks of life with no more than primary school education can study for a higher degree. It remains one of the lowest cost institutions in the country for a person to gain a university degree. It is well on its way to becoming self-supporting but may take a bit longer than the original plan. It is rated as a Tier 5 institution in the country with the potential to do even better in the future.

I have been privileged to serve as chief executive to four chairmen of Councils (including the late Tun) of public and international academic institutions. I can say that Tun was probably the most inspiring, exasperating, challenging and fun person of them all. He was amusing, demanding, conspiring but remained always focused. His demise has left a hard-to-fill vacuum.

LKY AUGUST 2005



# Members Of The Former WOU Council *Remember* **Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik**



*"I was involved in the initial discussions and planning for the establishment of an Open University under the auspices of what came to be known as the Wawasan Education Foundation. Whilst waiting for the Foundation's Vice Chancellor to take office, I was asked to act as the interim CEO. During these early years I worked closely with Tun Lim Keng Yaik, the Founder of what is now the Wawasan Open University. I was a little unsure what to expect of this seasoned politician, but after the first serious meeting we had with him, I felt very reassured."*

*Tun Lim admitted from the start that he knew little about University planning and management and made it clear that he will concentrate his efforts on getting the necessary funds and to facilitate the passage towards attaining official approval for the establishment of the University. The management and running of the University, he assured us would remain with professional educationists.*

*True to his word he did not interfere with the running of WOU, and protected it when others felt otherwise.*

*Tun's other obsessions was to ensure that WOU delivered Relevant, Quality, and Affordable education for working adults - attributes that he held on to till the last. He has certainly left a compassionate legacy. WOU will miss you, Tun."*

**Dato' Dr Sharom Ahmat**, Former Deputy Chairman of WOU Council

*"Being closely associated with the late Tun LKY for almost three decades, writing this tribute is special and significant to me both personally and professionally. A towering Malaysian, Tun was gifted with unique qualities of leadership in getting things done. He was quick to grasp essentials to prescribe remedial actions which he energetically pursued with passion and pragmatism. Thanks to his vision, the creation of the Malaysian Timber Certification Council with an endowment fund to promote sustainable forest management and the diversification of the timber industry, in spite of controversies, put Malaysia in the forefront of tropical forestry. The growth and development of WOU into a respected institution of higher learning owes much to this great Malaysian. To me, the late Tun's contributions to the nation, are monumental."*

**Dato' Freezailah Che Yeom**



*"Tun Lim was very passionate about education because he believed it was the only route for progress for Malaysia. Wawasan Open University was his "baby" and I am sure Tun regarded the formation of the University as one of his biggest achievements. He supported the University's vision of providing affordable and lifelong education, particularly for the working population and he marshalled his many resources in support of this cause."*

*Behind his bark, which was always worse than his bite, Tun Lim injected humour in stressing his message, namely the importance of good education."*

**Dato' Dr Mahani Zainal Abidin**

*"Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik was a leader and visionary with unparalleled passion and commitment to WOU. He cared deeply about access to education for everyone, particularly the disadvantaged, and he insisted on quality education across the board. Tirelessly and selflessly, he transformed WOU from an idea into a great institution and legacy."*

**Ms Rinalia Abdul Rahim**







*"I first met Tun Lim in the late 70s in Ipoh through his late brother Dato' K K Lim, who was then a mining consultant. Tun Lim joined us for drinks after dinner one night and he straight away made an impression on me. Later he moved up the ladder in Gerakan politics and took over as Party President and became the Minister of Primary Industries. At that time I was running a tin smelting company (Dato' Keramat Holdings Bhd), so I had many meetings with Tun Lim in his office at the Ministry in KL. The tin crisis in the late 80s brought us together numerous times and it was his sharp thinking and commitment that helped us in the industry throughout the difficult period.*

*Tun Lim was a straight talker, sharp and passionate with all things he did over the years. When I was appointed a council member of WOU six years ago he again appeared in my life. With WOU it was all PASSION, he wanted to see the University succeed as a truly open university for all Malaysians. He made sure that WOU was well funded, calling upon his old friends to make large donations to the WOU fund.*

*Tun Lim had a dry sense of humour, he was strict but would always listen to reason. He did not mince his words and he gave it to you straight. I always tried to chat with him before or after Council meetings as he was very concerned with what was happening in Penang. My condolences to Toh Puan Wong Yoon Chuan and all his children, he shall always be in my memories, God bless his soul."*

**Dato' Seri Nazir Ariff**

*"Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik was a man with incredible vision, drive and energy. Having known and worked with him for more than 20 years, I've found him to be someone who was not afraid to learn new things and absorbed these new knowledge quickly and easily. He goes into minute details so no one can fool him. He remembers facts and figures and people.*

*He is a leader who delivers on his promises and commitments. The way he almost single-handedly raised enormous funds to build and sustain Wawasan Open University shows his determination and true grit. Truly without Tun Lim's commitment WOU wouldn't have been established or succeeded. I remember his wit and wry sense of humour that had enlivened meetings of the University Council. We shall miss a great man yet humble, simple and caring."*

**Tan Sri Dr Michael Yeoh**

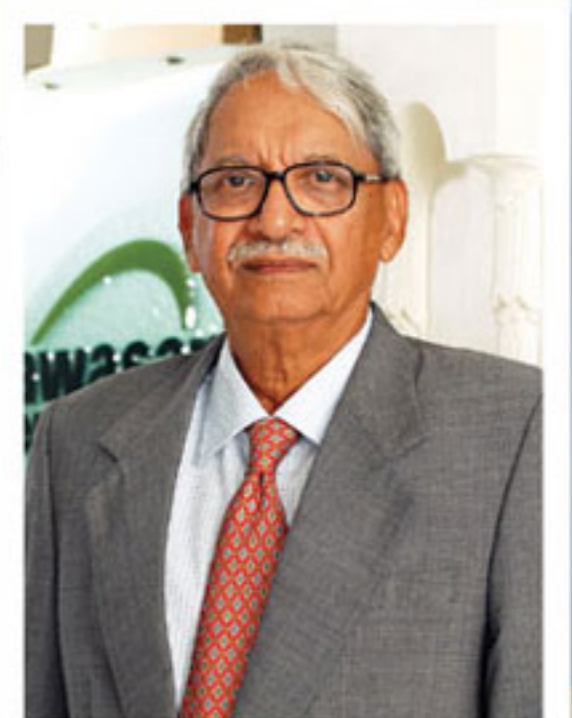


*"For Tun the establishment of the University represented the embodiment and personal fulfilment of a social objective. His devotion, passion and commitment to the task contributed immeasurably to what the University is today. His visionary and inspirational leadership during the developmental phase made it possible to achieve success without sacrificing the standards and traditions normally associated with other well-established universities."*

**Mr R Padmanathan**

*"Tun Dr Lim Keng Yaik was one of a kind – hard to find. Everything he undertook he did after careful evaluation and with great passion, be it politics, administration and management, needs and welfare of the rakyat and most importantly education. The way he pursued the concept of quality and affordable higher education for Malaysians who missed out the opportunity in their earlier lives, encapsulates his great qualities. In the establishment of WOU, he demonstrated great missionary zeal and provided the required and necessary leadership. Right up to the end there was no letting up on his part. Truly remarkable!"*

**Dato' Seri Chet Singh**



*"Tun Lim Keng Yaik is the one person in the Government benches for whom I have always had the utmost respect. He often spoke his mind without fear or favour and even in public. He was a medical man but spoke on political and economic issues with authority. We Malaysians were the beneficiaries thanks to the balance he provided.*

*Unlike other key government leaders, LKY did not venture into any community-based economic activities. He chose only to venture into education. That too was fairly late in his political career. More importantly, his focus was in helping the disadvantaged. This he did by founding WOU and opting for open distance learning (and not for face-to-face learning). His goal was to reach out to the less fortunate who had been forced (by economic circumstances) to enter the job market with only a basic education (and who did not have the means to pursue a tertiary education in their youth). Equally important, he shared his VC's vision to provide these working adults with quality education and not to cut corners in pursuit of quick profits.*

*He committed to quality by agreeing to a long enough time horizon for this venture into tertiary education to break-even and by raising the required funds from highly philanthropic-minded business families such as the Yeap family and Tan Sri Syed Mokhtar. With cancer claiming our founder's life prematurely, those who take over the baton from him have no choice but to find the additional resources and tweak the business model to include face-to-face learning to cross-subsidise (if need be) open distance learning so as to realise our founder's cherished vision."*

**Dato' Dr R Thillainathan**



# Reflections

"I am deeply saddened by the demise of Tun LKY. The passing of this great man has robbed WOU of a champion who has not only worked tirelessly to build the institution but has also always insisted that the University must deliver high quality education to all its learners."

**Dato' Dr Wong Tat Meng,**

Member, Board of Governors & former Vice Chancellor of WOU



"Around 1995-96, the Gerakan Education Bureau first deliberated on the issue of setting up a virtual university, after that we took it to the party (then headed by Tun Lim Keng Yaik). With the agreement of the party, we organised a company, Gerakan Education Foundation, as a non-profit, charitable organisation. We also applied to the Ministry of Finance to get our donations tax exempted. After that, the University was set up."

We, a few on my own and others with Tun and the party leadership, went to Thailand, Hong Kong. The ideas for WOU were further strengthened during visits to Harvard, Cambridge, Oxford and to other universities, as to how they run them."

**Datuk Seri Kerk Choo Ting,**

former Gerakan Deputy President & WEF member

"He wanted to contribute back to society through education. It was his belief that some people may not have the chance to further their studies at university, as they may not be financially sound, or maybe due to family circumstances. With Wawasan Open University, these people will have the chance to come in and fulfil their dreams."

He had this idea for a long time in his mind, for the people of Malaysia to have a chance to pursue knowledge. I feel this was very noble of Tun Lim Keng Yaik and a very good cause, and I hope the public will make use of this University to further their studies."

**Datuk Ng Chiang Chin,**

Treasurer of PGRM & WEF member

"He is a true statesman, a politician with a vision, a politician who is ever ready to sacrifice for a cause, for whatever is right. He would never, for the purpose of getting political mileage, put the interest of the people and nation in jeopardy. This is the difference between a true statesman and a selfish politician."

He dared to make decisions and once he made a decision, he's committed, he holds on to it. And he'll stand by it. I think these are some of the qualities that made him different from other politicians."

**Dato' Dr Teng Hock Nan,**

Penang Gerakan Chairman & WEF member



Get the latest WOU updates from  
Facebook and Twitter!

facebook

Follow us:

<http://www.facebook.com/WawasanOpenUniversity>



Follow us:

<http://twitter.com/WawasanOU>

In the minds of  
our readers

The University would like to hear from you. Whether it's a view, a comment or even a question, don't hesitate to drop us a mail at [mediainfo@wou.edu.my](mailto:mediainfo@wou.edu.my)

For more details, visit [wou.edu.my](http://wou.edu.my)

Call Toll-free Careline **1-300-888-968 (WOU)**

**Main Campus**  
**Wawasan Open University** (700364-W)  
54 Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, 10050 Penang, Malaysia.  
Tel: 04-218 0333 | Fax: 04-226 9323  
Email: [enquiry@wou.edu.my](mailto:enquiry@wou.edu.my)  
**WOU Regional Offices and Learning Centres**  
Open Tuesday to Sunday: 10.00am - 7.00pm  
**Penang Regional Centre**  
54 Jalan Sultan Ahmad Shah, 10050 Penang, Malaysia.  
Tel: 04-218 0133/4 | Fax: 04-228 4500  
Email: [ro\\_pg@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_pg@wou.edu.my)

**Ipoh Regional Centre**  
Wisma Gerakan, 80 Persiaran Greenhill, 30450 Ipoh, Perak.  
Tel: 05-242 6323 / 243 6323 | Fax: 05-254 9323  
Email: [ro\\_ip@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_ip@wou.edu.my)  
**Kuala Lumpur Regional Centre**  
Level 3 Menara PGRM, 8 Jalan Pudu Ulu,  
56100 Cheras, Kuala Lumpur.  
Tel: 03-9281 7323 / 9283 8323 | Fax: 03-9284 9323  
Email: [ro\\_kl@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_kl@wou.edu.my)  
(Library Services available Tuesday to Sunday,  
10.00am-7.00pm)

**Bandar Utama Regional Support Office**  
L2-6 & 7, Wisma BU8, 11, Lebuhr Bandar Utama,  
Bandar Utama, 47800 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.  
Tel: 03-7629 7223 / 7629 7123 | Fax: 03-7629 7023  
Email: [rso\\_bu@wou.edu.my](mailto:rso_bu@wou.edu.my)  
**Klang Regional Support Office**  
No. 41(Ground Floor), Jalan Kasuarina 2/KS7,  
Bandar Botanic Capital, 41200 Klang, Selangor.  
Tel: 03-3325 2353 / 3325 2373 | Fax: 03-3325 2313  
Email: [rso\\_klg@wou.edu.my](mailto:rso_klg@wou.edu.my)  
**Subang Regional Support Office**  
No. 34-1 Ground Floor, Jalan PJS 8/2, Mentari Plaza,  
Bandar Sunway, 46150 Petaling Jaya, Selangor.  
Tel: 03-5635 5323/ 5632 5323 | Fax: 03-5635 1323  
Email: [rso\\_sbg@wou.edu.my](mailto:rso_sbg@wou.edu.my)

**Johor Bahru Regional Centre**  
17 & 19 Jalan Jaya 2, Taman Jaya, 81300 Skudai, Johor.  
Tel: 07-556 4323 / 556 6323 | Fax: 07-554 9323  
Email: [ro\\_jb@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_jb@wou.edu.my)  
**Kota Bharu Regional Centre**  
3956 Tingkat Bawah, Wisma Gerakan,  
Jalan Temenggong, 15000 Kota Bharu, Kelantan.  
Tel: 09-748 7323 | Fax: 09-748 9323  
Email: [ro\\_kb@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_kb@wou.edu.my)  
\*Open Monday-Saturday from 10.00am-7.00pm  
**Kuching Regional Centre**  
14 Westin Avenue, Jalan Tun Jugah,  
93350 Kuching, Sarawak.  
Tel: 082-578 923 | Fax: 082-576 923  
Email: [ro\\_kc@wou.edu.my](mailto:ro_kc@wou.edu.my)