

Citation on Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam for Admission to Honorary Fellowship, Academy of Medicine, Singapore on Friday, 28 April 2006

Mr Master, Distinguished Guest, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is indeed my privilege and honour to read the citation on Dr Tony Tan, a visionary who has made great contributions to our nation especially in the areas of education, research and the life sciences.

Dr Tan was born on 7 February 1940 and had his primary and secondary education in St. Patrick's School from 1947 to 1956. He completed his pre-university education at St. Joseph's Institution and was awarded a Singapore Government State Scholarship in 1958 to study physics at the University of Singapore. This he did with great distinction and won several academic awards before graduating with a First Class Honours in Physics in 1962.

Dr Tan continued his studies at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on an Asia Foundation Scholarship and graduated in 1964 with a Master of Science degree specialising in Operations Research.

After teaching in the Physics Department of the University of Singapore for a year, Dr Tan was awarded a Research Scholarship in 1965 by the University of Adelaide to study for a PhD in Applied Mathematics. He graduated in 1967 and was appointed a Lecturer in the Department of Mathematics at the University of Singapore. In 1969, Dr Tan left the university to join the Overseas-Chinese-Banking Corporation as a Sub-Manager and was appointed a General Manager of the bank in 1978.

Dr Tan responded to the call of duty to serve the country and was elected to Parliament as the Member of the Sembawang Constituency and was also appointed as a Senior Minister of State for Education in February 1979. He was appointed Minister for Education on 1 June 1980 and concurrently, the Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Singapore.

A year later, Dr Tan was appointed Minister for Trade and Industry but continued to oversee the development of higher education in Singapore in his concurrent appointment as the Minister-in-charge of the National University of Singapore and the Nanyang Technological Institute.

From October 1983 to January 1985, Dr Tan served as the Minister for Finance while he held his concurrent position as the Minister for Trade and Industry. Dr Tan was appointed Minister for Education from January 1985 to December 1991. He was also the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Health between January and May 1985 and

the Minister for Trade and Industry between May 1985 and February 1986.

Dr Tan made several changes during his tenure as Minister for Education which has enhanced our education system significantly. Pastoral care and career guidance were introduced in our schools and independent schools were established to allow for greater autonomy. He also recognised the importance of academic research and encouraged this through tax incentives and government grants.

In December 1991, Dr Tan stepped down from the Cabinet to return to the private sector as OCBC's Chairman and Chief Executive Officer. However, he remained the Member of Parliament for the Sembawang Group Representation Constituency.

Once again, Dr Tan responded to the call to serve his country when he rejoined the Cabinet in August 1995 and was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence. In August 2003, Dr Tan relinquished his Defence portfolio and was appointed Deputy Prime Minister and Coordinating Minister for Security and Defence.

Dr Tan's involvement with the trade union movement goes back to 1979 when he was appointed Chairman of the NTUC Investment and Co-operative Committee. Dr Tan also served as the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of NTUC Income, the labour movement's insurance co-operative from 1980 to 1991. In 1988, Dr Tan was awarded the Medal of Honour by the National Trades Union Congress.

In spite of his demanding work schedule, Dr Tan was able to achieve a good balance between work and family life. He is married to Mary Chee Bee Kiang whom I am sure was his source of inspiration and support. They have four children, three sons and one daughter.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is very evident that Dr Tony Tan is an extraordinary man who has served in the Cabinet with great distinction. He could foresee the importance of the life sciences and played a major role in its development in our country. He has also been a great advocate of the importance of education and research in a knowledge-based economy. Mr Master, it is my honour to present to you Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam who is a most worthy recipient of the Honorary Fellowship of our Academy.

Christopher Goh *FAMS*