

NUS to get almost \$50m to honour J.Y. Pillay

■ BY AMELIA TAN

SINGAPORE Airlines (SIA) and the Singapore Exchange (SGX) have jointly donated \$10 million to programmes at the National University of Singapore (NUS) named after their founding chairman, Mr J.Y. Pillay.

They were the major contributors to a \$12.9 million gift from a group of about 10 corporations and individuals. Both SIA and SGX contributed \$5 million each.

The Government, which will put in up to \$3 for every dollar donated, has pledged up to \$36.7 million.

This brings the total value of the gift to up to \$49.6 million.

The gift will fund two professorships, a fellowship and a bursary for needy students at the new Yale-NUS liberal arts college, and the J.Y. Pillay Comparative Asia Research Centre and fellowship at the NUS Global Asia Institute. The centre will focus on cross-disciplinary research into issues pertinent to China, India and Indonesia.

The other donors include Deutsche Bank and law firm Allen & Gledhill, and individuals such as Mr Low Check Kian, chairman of asset management and private equity firm NewSmith Capital Partners (Asia).

Mr Pillay, 77, is the rector of the third residential college at NUS University Town. He is also an adjunct professor at NUS' Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy. He was chairman of SIA from 1972 to 1996, and chairman of SGX from 1999 to 2010. He also served as the permanent secretary of ministries such as finance, defence and national development.

NUS president Tan Chorh Chuan paid tribute to Mr Pillay yesterday in a speech before a lecture by Sir Peter Crane, the first visiting J.Y. Pillay Distinguished Professor at Yale-NUS College.

Sir Peter, the dean of the Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies, spoke on conservation and the use of plants in the 21st century.

Professor Tan said he sees special significance in naming initiatives at the Yale-NUS College after Mr Pillay. He said Mr Pillay is a "remarkable encapsulation of the qualities" that the college stands for, such as rigour, critical thinking and broad-based perspectives.

The college is a collaboration between NUS and top-rated Yale University in the United States. Classes start in August next year.

An SIA spokesman said: "This donation for a very worthwhile educational cause acknowledges Mr Pillay's contributions and will help fund initiatives that future leaders can benefit from."

SGX chief executive Magnus Bocker said: "We trust our support will seed the ground for more thought leadership and impactful research in Singapore."

Mr Pillay told reporters yesterday before Sir Peter's talk: "I am humbled by this honour and deeply appreciative of the generous gifts from the many donors. I am confident that the NUS community will benefit from the initiatives at the Yale-NUS College and the NUS Global Asia Institute that are made possible by this gesture."