

Honorary Degree Citation

Mr. S.R. Nathan

The Singapore Management University confers upon the 6th President of the Republic of Singapore Mr. S.R. Nathan the degree of Doctor of Letters (Honoris Causa).

This is one of the University's highest forms of recognition for exceptional individuals and is bestowed not only to acknowledge Mr Nathan's outstanding contribution and dedicated support to SMU but also a lifetime of exemplary public service to our nation, including his two illustrious terms as the sixth and longest-serving President of Singapore. Mr Nathan provided inspiring leadership and invaluable guidance as Patron of SMU from 1999 to 2011, enabling the University to establish its high standing in Singapore, the region and around the world. Upon his retirement from the Presidency in 2011, he was appointed the Distinguished Senior Fellow and the SMU School of Social Sciences at SMU.

Mr Nathan's relationship with SMU started even before he was the University's patron. He has been very supportive of SMU's various activities, hosting dinners at the Istana in appreciation of several key events including the Lee Foundation donation, Wharton Global Alumni Forum, and in 2012 giving keynote speeches at the Social Sciences Conference, Singapore Mediation Lecture, and launching SMU Singapore-India Business Dialogue 2012 with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Mr Tharman Shanmugaratnam as the Guest-of-Honour. He also helped SMU launch the India Initiatives office, facilitating the emergence of SMU as a knowledge partner for the 2012 PanIIT Global Conference, and Pan-IIM 2013 IIMpact Conference. SMU's relationship with the University of Yangon was spearheaded by Mr Nathan who helped set the stage for joint collaborations between the two universities. The universities are now in discussions to provide a three-week certificate programme in Fundamentals of Innovation, Entrepreneurship & Business Management for University of Yangon's first batch of undergraduate students, a Management Development Programme for their senior academics and university administrators as well as exchange programmes for their students, faculty members and university administrators. Also on track is a possible joint authorship with SMU Provost & Deputy President, Professor Rajendra Srivastava and our Case Writing team on Singapore's economic history.

Aside from the academic community, Mr Nathan who came from modest beginnings and climbed to the apex of office through his innate potential and determination has been widely acknowledged as an inspiration for Singaporeans. Among other appointments, he

worked as medical social worker and seamen's welfare officer in the 1950s. In the early 1960s, he served for three years as Director of the Labour Research Unit of the Labour Movement and then established what is now known as the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) at a time of industrial unrest and frequent strikes. His book "Winning Against The Odds" dwells on his experience then.

Shortly after Singapore's independence in 1965, he was transferred to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he served for six years before moving to the Ministry of Defence. There, he served as Director of the Security and Intelligence Division between 1971 and 1979 with the rank of permanent secretary. During this time, Mr Nathan dealt with a number of terrorist acts in Singapore, including the hijacking of the Laju ferry in 1974, in which he volunteered as a hostage and negotiated hard with four hijackers from the Japanese Red Army and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine for the safe release of the ferry's crew.

Upon his retirement from the civil service in 1982, Mr Nathan took on the position of Executive Chairman of the Straits Times Press and later Singapore Press Holdings in 1984.

In 1988, Nathan was appointed High Commissioner to Malaysia before becoming Ambassador to the United States two years later. Both appointments took place against a backdrop of strained bilateral ties. In the case of the former, he took on the appointment soon after Israel President Chaim Herzog visited Singapore, which led to tensions with Malaysia.

After the two stints, Mr Nathan was Singapore's Ambassador-at-large and became Director of the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies in the Nanyang Technological University.

He was elected President in 1999, and soon after taking office, founded the President's Challenge in 2000 'to convey that the more able in society have a special responsibility to help the rest of society and that all Singaporeans can make a difference in our community.' The annual fund-raising, volunteer drive and social enterprise award initiative which has raised more than S\$100 million for more than 500 beneficiary organisations since it began continues to this day.

Throughout his remarkable career, Mr Nathan has served Singapore with a strong commitment, dedication and distinction. SMU is privileged to have one of Singapore's most distinguished public servants join the ranks of our Honorary Doctors.

SMU confers this Doctor of Letters (Honoris Causa) degree upon Mr S.R. Nathan to celebrate and express gratitude for his 15-years of dedicated support for SMU and close to 60 years of selfless service to the people and nation of Singapore.

Unfortunately, Mr Nathan is unable to attend today's Commencement. However, we intend to hold a separate ceremony for him later in the year to mark the conferment of this degree.