

A Tribute to Professor Koh Lip Lin



Former Dean of Science and ex MP of Singapore, Prof Koh Lip Lin, who was one of the Singapore's pioneers in education, died of pneumonia on 12 Feb 2015 aged 79.

Prof Koh was among the first batch of graduates at the Chinese-medium Nanyang University or Nantah. He went on to pursue his PhD degree from Boston University. He later taught at the Department of Chemistry at Nanyang University (from 1964 to 1979) and at the National University of Singapore (from 1980 to 1996). He was the first Dean of Science at the National University of Singapore and had previously served as the Head of Department of Chemistry and Dean of Science at Nanyang University, before the merger of Nanyang University and University of Singapore.

After his retirement from the Department of Chemistry, NUS, he was engaged as a part-time research fellow at CE Resources Pte Ltd, an NUS spin-off company. He rejoined the Department as an Adjunct Senior Research Fellow in 1992, offering selfless guidance to staff and students on solving crystal structures with his expertise. He is undeniably one of the best crystallographers in Singapore and is particularly good at solving knotty disorder problems.

He had also served the University as a member of the Council. He used to helm the Singapore Association for the Advancement of Science. From 1994 to 1997 he served as a co-editor of the scientific journal *Acta Crystallographica*.

Apart from his endearing contributions to the University, Prof Koh also provided his service to the public. From 1979 to 1996, Prof Koh was an elected Member of Parliament of Singapore, playing his part in national policies. He was conferred the Public Administration Medal (Silver) in 1978.

He served as a People's Action Party MP from 1979 to 1996, first in Nee Soon and then in Nee Soon South. As MP, Dr Koh oversaw the transformation of Nee Soon into a new town, tackling teething problems with transport and defects in flats.

Among the tributes to him on Facebook was one from Nee Soon resident Ng Say Tiong, who said that Dr Koh was "very patient" in dealings with resettlement issues.

PM Lee Hsien Loong credited Prof Koh for his role in education reforms on a Facebook post on 14 Feb 2015. One difficult decision Prof Koh and other Chinese-educated MPs had to make "was to support the reforms in the late 1970s that merged Nantah with NUS" and led to the formation of the Nanyang Technological University.

PM Lee added that "Today we no longer have 'Chinese-educated' MPs, but many MPs speak Mandarin as a result of our bilingual policy. Our education system has progressed and so has Singapore, thanks to Dr Koh and his generation."

Dr Chan Tao Soon, founding President of NTU and a former Dean at NUS, told The Sunday Times; "Dr Koh had good views of what made a strong faculty. He was generally quiet but when it came to important decisions, he was persistent in putting things right."

In appreciation of his selfless dedications, long term contribution and service to the University and to the public, he was awarded the Outstanding Science Alumni Awards in 2005.

His integrity, passion, commitment and drive will be well remembered by all who knew him and an inspiration to all NUS Chemists.

Prof Koh will be deeply missed and fondly remembered by all.