

Singapore

**Engineers 'need broad set of skills'**

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Business, economics and human needs matter too: DPM Teo

TODAY'S engineers have to know about more than just how to solve technical problems, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean said yesterday.

They also have to understand business and economics, and how to meet human needs.

Mr Teo was speaking at the launch of One Degree, Many Choices, a book about the post-university lives of the 557 pioneer engineering students from Nanyang Technological Institute (NTI), Nanyang Technological University's (NTU) predecessor.

He said studying electrical engineering had helped to give him a deeper understanding of the technical details of ships while he was in the Navy, as well as of water and waste-treatment plants when he was environment minister.

'I have also applied the analytical and problem-solving skills from engineering to think about broader issues, diagnose problems, and try to work out practical solutions as I moved through various jobs in my career.'

Mr Teo added that engineers 'need to know more about business and economics, and to work out solutions that meet not just engineering and technical requirements, but also human needs'.

He paid tribute to them in his speech for their role in Singapore's 'tremendous progress'.

Mr Teo said the development of NTI was 'part of a vision to transform Singapore from the low-skill, low-wage economy that it was, to an economy which could create new and challenging high-skill and well-paying jobs for our people'.

Yesterday, a \$1 million fund was also launched to promote the leadership development of engineering undergraduates at NTU.

The book, targeted at students, aims to make engineering an accessible and attractive course to study in the face of a myriad of new options, said Mr Liu Fook Thim, who was chairman of its committee and also a contributor.

'We hope our life stories will show them the versatility of an engineering education and encourage them to take it up.'

Graduates of NTI's pioneer cohort in 1985 went on to dabble in many other fields, and include a policewoman, a curator and a counsellor. A third of the cohort's stories are included in the book.

One Degree, Many Choices succeeded in inspiring 17-year-old Sofia Bensily, who was enrolled in the Singapore Sports School two years ago and planning to play badminton at a national level.

Her father, Mr Sonny Bensily, said he became concerned about who would eventually take over his multi-million dollar company, **Prime Structures Engineering**. He even made plans to sell it after realising that none of his children seemed inclined towards becoming engineers. At around that time, he handed his daughter a rough draft of the manuscript for the book. 'She just came back and told us she wanted to be an engineer,' said Mr Bensily, 50, whose story is included in the book.

'Of course she is free to change her mind, but it made me decide not to sell my company, and I'm thankful that the book helped to inspire her.'

Sofia, now a student at Raffles Institution, said she had been struck by how the pioneer batch had graduated during a recession but still managed to pull through and make successes of themselves. She plans to enrol at NTU after her A levels.

'I want to follow in my father's footsteps,' she said.

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USEFUL LESSONS

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Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, who studied electrical engineering at university