

Indonesian tycoon gives S\$1m to set up SMU scholarship

By **CAI YONG**

caiyong@sph.com.sg

INDONESIAN business tycoon Tahir, founder of the diversified Mayapada Group, yesterday donated S\$1 million towards the establishment of a scholarship for Indonesian nationals at the Singapore Management University (SMU).

Each year, one scholarship, worth S\$60,000 and valid for four years, will be disbursed.

Mr Tahir also plans to donate another S\$1 million to set up a scholarship for Singaporeans at SMU.

A Nanyang University alumnus, Mr Tahir has been active in the philanthropy scene in Singapore, having contributed S\$30 million to the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine at National University of Singapore over two years ago. He hopes that his efforts will bring Indonesia and Singapore closer.

He believes that the accountability of local institutions means that the donated sums will be well managed.

Back home, Mr Tahir has also been active. Working closely with the Gates Foundation, he offers free heart surgery for the needy at the hospitals he owns. With support from the Indonesian president, he has also put in place a scheme whereby Indonesian cancer patients below the age of 12 can receive free treatment at any hospital.

Mr Tahir's humble beginnings have formed his worldview.

"I come from a poor family. So it is a miracle, that today at 61 years old, that I can make some money from my country and give back some money to my country. It's a big grace from God to me," said the devout Christian, who is son of a pedicab maker.

Mr Tahir sees poverty as a problem he cannot ignore. "I see so many poor people every day, when I go to work from my house to my office. I cannot pretend that they (are not there) ... I have to face the fact that this is my country and I have a responsibility to do my part," he said.