



Dr Tahir (left) with SMU president Arnoud De Meyer (right) and first recipient of the Tahir Indonesian Scholarship Ratna Sari Dessy. The first-year accountancy student says she feels "really surprised, happy and blessed". PHOTO: SINGAPORE MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

## Tycoon's extra \$1m surprise donation for SMU

By **MARISSA LEE**

A \$1 MILLION cheque was what the Singapore Management University (SMU) expected to receive yesterday from an Indonesian tycoon, to fund a new scholarship for Indonesian students. But the 62-year-old billionaire philanthropist, Dr Tahir, surprised all at the signing ceremony when he announced that he would donate another \$1 million for Singaporean students in need of financial aid.

Dr Tahir, who goes by a single name and is founder of the Mayapada Group, which has businesses in areas like real estate and health care, said the idea came to him during the ceremony itself. "This million is for Indonesians, but I think that I should not be so selfish and so narrow. So I'd like to give another million to SMU for the Singapore students," he announced to reporters after the ceremony at SMU.

"Words cannot fully express our deep appreciation of Dr Tahir's support to our students," said SMU president Arnoud De Meyer in a speech.

"We are very glad that Dr Tahir shares SMU's vision and mission."

Dr Tahir has donated not only to SMU; he has also given a total of \$33 million to the National University of Singapore and set up a million-dollar trust fund in June with the Singapore Table Tennis Association.

"I always have high appreciation for the Singapore Government and the Singapore education system because I graduated from Singapore, from Nanyang University," he said.

SMU's Tahir Indonesian Scholarship, worth \$60,000, will be awarded to one undergraduate each year. It will cover four years of school fees and study-related expenses.

First-year accountancy student Ratna Sari Dessy, 20, is the first recipient of this scholarship. She said her mother, who supervises an Internet cafe in their hometown Batam, has been supporting her since her father died when she was just 10. Said the former Jurong Junior College student: "I feel really surprised, happy and blessed."

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