



**IN REMEMBRANCE OF ALUMNUS MARTIN KHOR KOK PENG (1951-2020)
MALAYSIA & THE THIRD WORLD INTELLECTUAL HERO**



Remembering
MARTIN KHOR

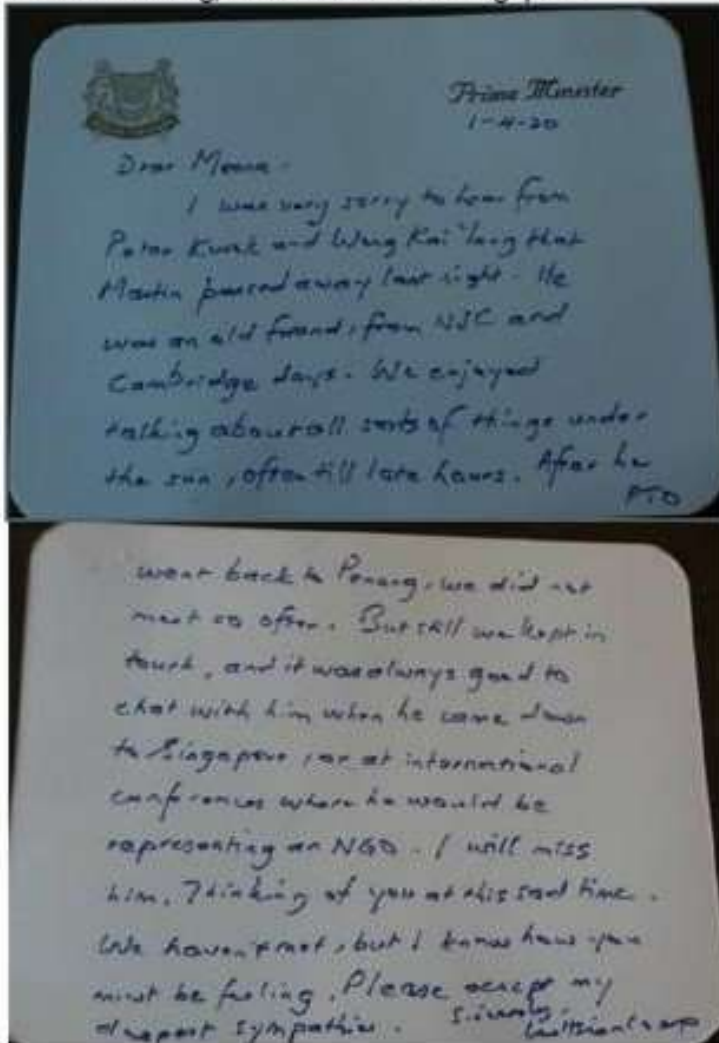
MARTIN KHOR
1951 - 2020



PRIME MINISTER MR LEE HSIEN LOONG AND MARTIN KHOR MET IN SCHOOL IN 1970. BOTH STUDIED AT CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY FROM 1971 TO 1974 AND REMAINED LIFE LONG FRIENDS.



Lee Hsien Loong, Prime Minister of Singapore



*I know Martin as a scholar, economist,
prolific writer and journalist, social and
economic activist, environmentalist and
a community stalwart!*

We will miss him and may he REST In Peace!

- Peter YB Tay

*May God give the entire family
strength to bear the loss.*

- Abedeen Tyebally



*I remember we had after dinner walks at Kingsmead
Hall during NJC days. And I would wake up in middle of
the night to sit and watch him study very hard just before
our final exams.*

*Time has just passed us by. We both from St. Xavier's
Institution Penang came on ASEAN Scholarship to join NJC.*

- Fong Seok Phoy

*Thank you, Martin, for all you
have done for humanity!
May the Lord keep you in his love.*

- Wong Moh Keed

*I am indeed sad to hear of the passing away of
my dear friend the late Martin Khor.*

*May God grant you and your family patience and steadfastness
in facing this difficult moment.*

- Hassan Ibrahim



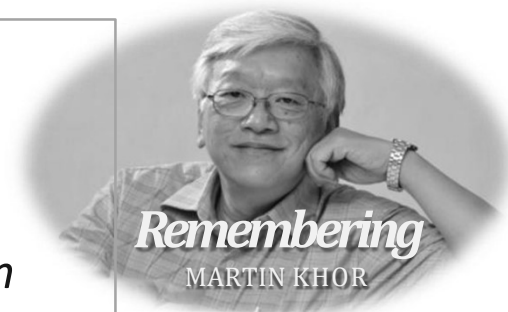
My memories of Martin in school days were his strong Penang accent and The College Annual as well as Dawn Magazine which were successful publications. He worked on them quietly and effectively as Chief Editor of the College Annual together with Tham Han Chew and Fan Kee Sun. Those with him in Dawn Magazine included Fan Kee Sun (Chief Editor), Foo Si Kin, Carla Barker, Janet Ho.

When I headed Singapore School in Hong Kong, I was watching news on the protests at the Montreal WTO Conference - suddenly Martin Khor appeared on the screen protesting against global injustices.

On one occasion several years ago I was in Penang with my parents. I tried unsuccessfully to contact him through Consumers Association of Penang. It was only after Tang Ying Kee and Han Chew Shiuan visited him that I got his contact. I met him for tea in 2017 - still the same as in school days – friendly, humble, cheerful.

I only became aware of his international contributions and prestige very recently.

- Helen Choo



He was another one of those towering Malaysians who chose to harness his high intellect for the purpose of social activism in the pursuit of a more just and equitable society. Many of us will remember him for his eloquence of speech and writing when exposing the hypocrisy of the West in their trade negotiations or environmental policies. He had the ability of taking apart the abstract language of international policy, made necessarily opaque to eschew transparency, and articulate them in a way the public could understand. A way that helped empower the public with knowledge so that citizens could organize themselves to fight against the nefarious powers of the global elite. I have seen him do this brilliantly since the negotiations for the Earth Summit in 1992 until the recent negotiations of the TPPA and its variants. But, for many of us here, he was also a mentor - a man who always made time to explain to us the latest mutative tricks of the virus of capitalism and who was always willing to contribute. Martin, just like his mentor S.M. Idris before, are from a generation of Malaysian activists who dedicated their lives towards critiquing and therefore influencing the way globalization reshaped Malaysia and many parts of the developing world. A reshaping that often gave the weaker countries agency in determining their own destiny. You will be missed, Martin.

*- Lim Jee Yuan (Publication Manager at CAP in Penang)
Jee Yuan's two paintings (Kek Lok Si and Armenia Street, both beautiful Penang sceneries) are displayed at NJC in memory of Martin.
Photo shows Principal Ang Pow Chew and Vice Principal Alfred Tan with the two paintings.*



Our paths did not cross since we left NJC in 1971. Glad to visit Martin and Meena in Penang two years ago. The beautiful sunset at Penang Swimming club, which is right next door to Martin's residence brought back the memories when we were all young and energetic student council members.

Martin impressed me with his unassuming, scholastic and quick deep dive into geopolitical and economic issues in Malaysia and the world. Meena, whom I met for first time, has so much tenacity and was taking great care of Martin.

Martin, your strong commitment and contribution in bringing equality in the World will be long remembered. We will miss your voice especially as world economy is turning upside down with great uncertainties after the outbreak of Covid-19. May you rest in peace.

To Meena, do keep in touch and hope you can be active in the NJC69 family. Wish you well for your continued journey to keep the world green.

- Chin Tahn Joo



I knew Martin was very ill but the news of his death , was paralysing. He truly towered over everyone at NJC with his maturity, political and social awareness and vision at that young age. He was humble and always listened deeply. Also, choosing to go back home after his education to help the marginalized and give them a voice always struck me.

- Esther Selvarajoo von Lindeiner

Martin shared his knowledge on economics and insight on philosophy of life/happiness at all material times. He was always generous with his time whenever we met him in either Singapore or Penang.

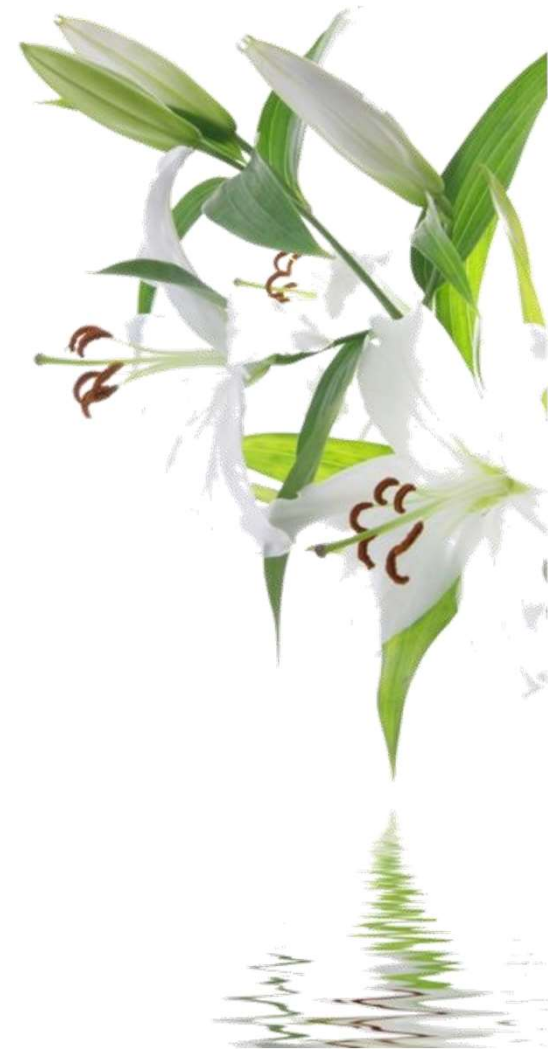
- Peter SK Koh / Vancouver, BC

On 1st April 2020 NJC lost a most outstanding alumnus Martin Khor. My deepest condolences to his wife Meena and family members.

He was in Arts and I Science. He was well known as an ASEAN scholar and leader. I became friends with his sister, Christine in Singapore. My relatives in Penang know Martin and his late father, Datuk Khor Cheang Kee. They are a prominent and established Penang family.

Martin would always be remembered fondly in his beloved hometown Penang, Malaysia and the outside world for his contributions to humanity.

- Koh Mui Keng



I visited Martin in Penang in July last year with Peter Kwok as I thought that might well be the last time I would see him. Martin was a good friend in NJC, some part of our time in the UK, and more than occasional flat mate when we were together in the civil service. Martin was smart, humble, and charming. He told me that I could complete his economics degree course in three months, and three years was too long for him although he had a lot of interesting activities there. We had interesting times together when he was working in Singapore.

On my last trip, I brought our favourite Pu'er tea and ginseng as my meeting gifts. Martin was overjoyed and ask Meena to make Pu'er tea. We all then adjourned to his guest meeting room. Martin sat on his sofa next to a pile of notes which he intended for publications. We had our usual deep and meaningful exchanges, just like old days in our twenties. With me was also Dr Ang Swee Chai who had come all the way from London to be with Martin.

The next day, I visited Martin again to say goodbye before my late afternoon flight home. I had the chance to speak with his elder sister at the balcony overlooking the beautiful calm sea. I told her she was a caring sister and that I was impressed. I almost wanted to tell her I would be back again to tell Martin about some alignment qigong exercises to strengthen his internal qi apart from ginseng and medicines. In the end I just said that the ocean breeze was enervating. I said goodbye to Martin and promised to see him again next year ie 2020. He looked at me a little bewildered and said nothing. It was a sad farewell of silence.

I always remember what my maternal grandfather told me (I was then 7 years old) while playing Chinese chess with me (to test my intelligence and character as one of his village student) that genius and talented people die young because the gods in heaven want them back early. I asked my grandfather what about me. He said that I will live a long life if I do good, do not do bad things and do not get angry.

Perhaps we are all back to old times when 70 years of age was considered long life - 人生七十古来稀。

- Hoong Bee Teck



THE LATE MR MARTIN KHOR, A PROUD ALUMNUS OF SINGAPORE'S NATIONAL JUNIOR COLLEGE

I first met Martin when we were fellow Student Councilors at National Junior College (NJC) in 1969. It was Singapore's first Junior College and we were the pioneering batch of students adjusting to a new way of college life with lectures and tutorials, with lots of time between classes to chat, argue or banter. Martin came to NJC as an ASEAN Scholar from Penang. He was a deep-thinker with strong views on issues that he cared about - views which were often refreshingly different, adding to the emergent intellectual diversity of then newly-established NJC.

Martin was immensely loyal to his mother country, Malaysia. This became even more evident when he wrote for the Star with impactful articles. He courageously offered many concrete proposals for the economic advancement of Malaysia. His passion for the poor, the underprivileged and the weak are now well-acknowledged by both government and non-government agencies in Malaysia and beyond, including the Third World Network, the Consumers Association of Penang, Sahabat Alam Malaysia, among others.

Martin was the quintessential social activist, who conscientiously fought for societal, environmental and inequality issues to be addressed with a strong sense of urgency. He will be sadly missed by his many friends, by Malaysia and globally by many who shared his vision for a better world.

- Dr Francis Koh Cher Chiew



Martin was an ASEAN scholar from Penang. He was one of several ASEAN scholars posted to the National Junior College in 1969, the Pioneer JC of an educational concept of Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, the then Prime Minister of Singapore. Mr Lee wanted Singapore to establish a school leaving environment that would nurture future scholars with the ethos of colleges like Eton in England. That is, a lecture- tutorial system which allows students to think and work independently on their own.

I had the privilege of having Martin in my Paper 8 literature class: The “Moderns” comprising of 7 “brave” students as it was the 1st time the paper was offered by a 6th form school in Singapore. I was into my 3rd year of teaching and was the youngest selected to teach in NJC. I was less than 10 years older than my students! It was the most enjoyable and fulfilling class of my teaching career. The students and I learnt from each other, often enriching the others’ insight into the authors/poets we researched and probed together, often led by deep and provoking questions posed by Martin. We did Hemingway, Hardy and VS Naipaul.

I had further interaction with Martin as the teacher in charge of our 1st year Bulletin of which he was the editor. Led by Martin and a select team of Co Writers and Photographers, the Bulletin captured the very ethos of Mr Lee’s concept of budding scholars who pioneered many firsts in the field of learning inside and outside the College. The students’ struggles and glorious attempts at independent learning were artfully captured in the carefully- selected photographs and writeup.

Martin Khor was an exceptionally bright and deep scholar. His maturity far surpasses his peers (maybe because he was a year older than the others. It could also be attributed to his reading far and wide subjects that were not usually within the Ken of most of our Singapore students). It is with deep regret that I hear of his passing. He lived a life of dedication to those less fortunate than him. This is so typical of this noble soul who lived passionately with a clear vision of his dreams.



The one decision I made to go visit Martin in Penang 2 years ago with Peter Kwok, Julia and Tahn Joo is one I never regret. We had four glorious days of eating, drinking and fellowshiping with Martin and Meena (his wife). There was no teacher/ student friction. We were all adults enjoying each others’ thoughts and dreams. Rest In Peace Martin.

- Mrs Pearl Goh



**THE LATE MR MARTIN KHOR, SERVICE WITH HONOUR:
TO HIS BELOVED MOTHERLAND**

When news of the demise of Martin Koh appeared in our NJC69 WhatsApp group chat, I was shocked and saddened. I met Martin in National Junior College (NJC) in 1969 when we were serving together as the Student Councilors at the College. He came to study in NJC under the ASEAN Scholarships which was a talent attraction programme devised by the Singapore government. I remembered having some interesting discussions with Martin and few other scholars. From which, I understood why they left home, some as far away as Penang like Martin, to study in Singapore, and the many challenges they faced; as well as their sincere appreciation of the scholarship awards which provided them an opportunity to pursue their dreams. Notwithstanding that, Martin has chosen to return back to Malaysia to serve his country by birth, a decision I truly respect and salute. His valuable contributions as a critic writer, a courageous political advisor and a caring social activist championing for the underclass clearly demonstrated his passionate love for his motherland. We as his fellow college classmates will certainly miss him dearly. May he rest in peace.

- Low Sin Leng



Our Last Meeting (Lunar New Year 2020)

You gave me your Malaysia Economy Book (updated) and your newly minted The Secret to Happiness (dedicated to granddaughter Isabel). You wrote in your characteristic though weakened handwriting “Thank you for your friendship for so many years and phases of our lives “To you, I also say the same words you wrote.

I treasure all my memories from the day we landed in London in October 1971 to Cambridge days when we jointly steered Cambridge University Malaysia Singapore Association to Singapore days when we went camping in Pulau Ubin (with Tan Hup Foi, Fong Seok Phoy, Hoong Bee Teck, Janet Ho, all from NJC as well as new friends Francis Khoo and Dr Ang Swee Chai).

Fast forward, over the last ten years in Penang we had many happy occasions with Meena, and friends like Dr Francis Tan, Chin Saik Yoon. You even brought me to your Saint Xavier’s Institution Form Five Class Gathering in your old classroom.

We had many loves and likes in common. In University days we thought we would operate a second-hand bookshop similar to G David’s of Cambridge. We both searched for knowledge not found in Hard Economics. Perhaps this knowledge is now distilled in The Secret to Happiness. We both treasured the family of people of Malaysia and Singapore, and we had many dear friends in common.

To Malaysian people and people of the South (Third World), you gave much alongside your best partners, Meena and Mohammed Idris, Founder, CAP (pictured with you)

To the world, I could say you had in your unpublished and uncompleted writings your unique economic analysis of how your beloved Malaysia arrived at what she is today and how she could be steered towards a bright outcome for all

Farewell dear friend, no more earthly adventures to share in common loves and likes, in student travel across Europe, camping in Pulau Ubin, intellectual exchanges on almost every occasion we met.

Peter Kwok Kian Tow



Remembering MARTIN KHOR



*Martin in London 1980 at apartment
of Francis Khoo and Dr Ang Swee Chai*



*Martin in Penang 1995 taking a tea break from
writing his weekly column in The Star*



Martin with schoolmates at Consumers Association of Penang in 2017

Remembering MARTIN KHOR



Old friend Dr Ang Swee Chai visiting Martin in 2019



Mrs Pearl Goh and schoolmates visiting Martin and Meena in 2018