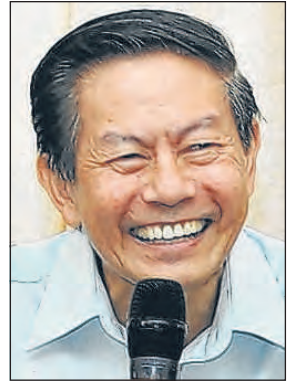


# Prof stresses importance of not saying 'no'

By KEZIA TOH

BUILDING a museum is not quite what one would expect a university lecturer to do.

But Professor Leo Tan (right) gamely took on the task, helming a team to raise \$46 million in just six months to build the Lee Kong Chian Natural History Museum at the National University of Singapore.



When it is completed in 2014, the 7,500 sq m museum will house three much-touted dinosaur fossils from Wyoming in the United States.

It is no mean feat, but that is not the most difficult thing the 67-year-old has had to do.

The marine biologist by training has also had to take on the role of administrator in his previous roles heading the Science Centre and the National Institute of Education.

Yesterday, Prof Tan stressed the importance of not accepting – and not saying – “no”, during the Fullerton-St Joseph’s Institution Leadership Lecture series at Fullerton Hotel.

Even though he was “reluctantly thrust” into some jobs during his career, he learnt to make the best of them by first ensuring that his staff found their jobs fulfilling. He told the audience: “When you say yes, you get to learn new things and skills you think are not useful for your current job, but actually, the things you do outside of your current job teach you how to do your... job better – this is the paradox.

“So don’t refuse when somebody comes to you with an offer that doesn’t seem attractive... meaningful or relevant to you, because it will become relevant as you move along the chain.”

Prof Tan, who graduated from St Joseph’s Institution in 1963, is also president and fellow of the Singapore National Academy of Science.

The lecture series, now in its second instalment, features former SJI boys who have played significant roles in Singapore’s development. Previous speakers included Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, former foreign minister George Yeo and National Kidney Foundation chairman Gerard Ee. The next speaker will be retired senior judge Richard Magnus.

Yesterday’s event saw 150 guests and students, including representatives from community and business groups, and professional associations.

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