NUS tribute to President Nathan

BY TESSA WONG

THE head of the National University of Singapore paid tribute last night to the university’s outgoing chancellor, President S R Nathan.

Speaking at a commencement dinner, NUS president Tan Chorh Chuan described Mr Nathan, 87, as “a great man” who had accomplished much in many areas.

He had also gone “far beyond” his official duties during his 12-year term as chancellor.

Professor Tan cited as an example a personal letter that Mr Nathan had written to school alumni in 2005, which helped raise about $1 million for students in need.

Mr Nathan also visited many of the university’s departments, spoke to large numbers of student groups and faculty, and hosted them at “countless” lunches and dinners at the Istana, said Prof Tan.

“For the NUS community, it is his genuine interest and deep engagement with NUS that we are most grateful for and cherish the most,” he said.

Mr Nathan announced two weeks ago that he would not seek another term of office.

When his term ends on Aug 31, he will step down as NUS chancellor, a position traditionally held by the president of Singapore.

On the difficult circumstances that Mr Nathan overcame to enter the University of Malaya, the predecessor of NUS, Prof Tan said: “He managed to do so because in whatever situation he found himself, and some of these were really strange ones, he would really apply himself – he would do his very best.”

He added that Mr Nathan has critical qualities such as integrity, an ability to connect with people, and humility, which enabled him to advance in his career.

Prof Tan said he hoped NUS students would be inspired by Mr Nathan’s example “to contribute, to do good, and to serve society well”.