The man who helped the Internet go global

Spore pioneer came up with solution that enabled multilingual Web, e-mail addresses

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It was his search for a way to gain electronic access to research information for his own work that got Associate Professor Tan Tin Wee, a biochemist, started on his campaign to promote the use of the Internet. He pushed for it to become accessible to everyone in every language. Last Monday, he was inducted into non-profit Internet Society's inaugural Hall of Fame in Geneva.

Big lesson

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PROF TAN TIN WEE, on getting Web and e-mail addresses into the multilingual (DNS) which was responsible for mapping Web addresses into memorable words such as faceb-

"They said that the DNS must remain pure and that something bad would happen if we tinkered with it," he recalls. "Our software was adopted by different Web browsers. Nothing had happened when people used the browsers."

By 2003, Prof Tan and his team had authored the Internet standard Internationalised Domain Name (IDN) in 2003. But it was not until 2010 that the standard was ratified, allowing all languages of the alphabet to appear in Web and e-mail addresses.

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To promote the use of the Internet among other academics and researchers, and then pushing for it to become accessible to everyone in every language.

Among his achievements from a list too long to publish:

- Set up the first World Wide Web server (www.nus.sg) with Mr Jek Kian, who was with then National Computer Board; he held the first website for government information services InfWeb.
- Promoted Internet multilingualism and provided access to the Internet to the deaf and other disabilities.
- Built the $28 million transaction - based Internet link called Singapo-

E-mail addresses

In the mid-1990s, as head of TechNet, Singapore's first Internet service provider for the research and development community, he spent his lunch hours helping the disabled.

At the Singapore School for the Deaf's Prince Charles Square premises, he climbed a ladder to step up the office himself.

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