



THE "boat refugees" during World War II — standing on the left is Mr C.K. Lee, former managing director of Asia Insurance. On his left is Mr Ho Weng Toh, one of Malayan Airways' first pilots.



DR Han with a powder presented to him at the reunion lunch yesterday. Looking on are Mr Choy (right) and Mr Hsieh.

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## 'Chungking boys' meet benefactor again after nearly 40 years

By CHUA LEONG KIAN

IT WAS a sentimental reunion after 40 years for 11 wartime Hongkong University students and their benefactor Dr Han Li-hu, 80, yesterday.

Although most of them are in their early sixties now, and working in different fields, they shared a common feeling: They might not have survived had Dr Han helped them.

Dr Han, a former Education Minister of the old China and secretary of the Sino-British Cultural Association during World War II, arrived here last Friday for a private visit.

### Trek

The saga began on Christmas Day, 1942, when Hongkong fell to the Japanese. About 30 Singapore and Malayan students in Hongkong University were asked by the Japanese to help them build the Greater Prosperity Circle of East Asia.

But they refused and, in the following weeks, broke up into smaller groups and left Hongkong for Chungking, China's wartime capital.

One of them, Mr Robert S.A. Hsieh, 62, now a lawyer, recalled their three-week-trek during which they had to sell almost everything to survive.

"By the time we reached Chungking, we were almost penniless," he said.

Then Professor Gordon King of Hongkong

University's medical faculty, who had fled to Chungking earlier, introduced them to Dr Han, then the secretary of the Sino-British Cultural Association.

In the following years, Dr Han gave them money and arranged for them to study at the Central University and the Shanghai Medical College, which had been moved to Chungking's suburbs.

Dr Han advanced them thousands of dollars, Mr Hsieh said, which could not be repaid because civil war between the communists and Kuomintang broke out after the war.

The students lost contact with Dr Han after the war.

### Wartime hero

Mr Hsieh returned to Singapore after reading law at Oxford because he could not practise law in China.

The reunion lunch yesterday at the Executive Club of the OCBC Centre included Mr Lim Tai Tim, 61, a retired mechanical engineer and younger brother of wartime hero Colonel Lim Boh Seng; Mr Y.F. Kan, 65, the resident director of The Bank of East Asia for South-east Asia; Mr K.K. Tan, director and international

division manager of the Four Seas Communication Bank.

Also at the luncheon were Dr O.C. Leow, Dr Ng Kok Teow, Dr Lee Sheng-yi, associate professor in the Business Administration Dept, NUS, and Mr Leong Chin Toong, who has retired from lecturing at the Institute of Education, Mr K.W. Choy, former Perak badminton champion, and Mr Ho Weng Toh, 61, one of the first pilots of the then Malayan Airways.

Mr Ho trained as a pilot with the Chinese Air Force.

### Touched

Yesterday, Mr Ho gave Dr Han a 1942 photograph of 20 smiling "boat refugees" from Hongkong immediately after they arrived at Huizhou in Guangdong province.

The Chungking boys also presented Dr Han with pewterware.

Dr Han, who was very touched by the gathering, said it reminded him of the war-torn China when they were in the temporary capital, Chungking.

Dr Han said he could still remember some of the faces when he met the Chungking group yesterday.

Dr Han Han received his Masters of Science degree from London University and was conferred an honorary doctorate by the De LaSalle College in the Philippines.

He was Taiwan's Ambassador to Thailand, Philippines and Greece from 1966 to 1972.

He was also responsible for moving the priceless collection of Chinese art treasures in Beijing's Palace Museum to Taiwan during the World War II.

### Driver dies as van skids

The driver of a van, Mr Bomee Nathan Krishnan, 34, was killed after his vehicle skidded and landed in a drain at the junction of Jalan Buroh and

Tanjong Kling Road early yesterday.

Those who saw the accident are requested to contact Sgt R. Katoni of Traffic Investigation Section at 913344 ext 772.