

3 Covid-19 experts in S'pore knighted by French government

Joyce Teo
Senior Health Correspondent

Three Covid-19 experts in Singapore were knighted by France yesterday in recognition of their outstanding contributions in health and science, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic, which helped to strengthen ties between the countries.

Singapore's chief health scientist Tan Chorh Chuan, and National Centre for Infectious Diseases executive director Leo Yee Sin were conferred the title of Knight of the French Order of the Legion of Hon-

our. Professor Laurent Rénia, director of the Respiratory and Infectious Diseases Programme at the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine at Nanyang Technological University and senior fellow at the A*Star Infectious Diseases Labs, was conferred the title of Knight of the French National Order of Merit.

They were bestowed the awards by France's Ambassador to Singapore Marc Abensour at the French Embassy in Cluny Park Road.

The Legion of Honour is France's highest award for outstanding service made by civilians or military personnel to the country, regardless of their citizenship, while the National Order of Merit, created in

1963, is the second national order after the Legion of Honor. Both orders consist of three ranks: Chevalier (Knight), Officier (Officer) and Commandeur (Commander).

Professor Tan told *The Straits Times* the award acknowledges the teams of people working behind the scenes on the research and development that has been useful for Singapore's response to the pandemic.

At the ceremony, Mr Abensour said Prof Tan collaborated with France on many bilateral exchanges and information sharing sessions regarding pandemic management, to the mutual benefit of both countries. Prof Leo played a crucial role as the chairman for the

Singapore side, in the France-Singapore scientific working group on infectious diseases that was set up in July 2020, he added.

Of the work group's contributions, he said: "This has opened up multiple channels of cooperation in these priority areas between Singapore and France, not only at our respective national levels, but also on the international stage."

He said Prof Rénia, who is French, distinguished himself as a reference for the Singaporean authorities, in addition to the high-quality scientific research he conducted in France.

joyceteo@sph.com.sg



At the French Embassy yesterday were (from left) the French Ambassador to Singapore Marc Abensour, with Professor Laurent Renia, Professor Leo Yee Sin and Professor Tan Chorh Chuan. PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN