



From left: Professor Lionel Wee, dean of the NUS Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences; Mr Haresh Sharma, resident playwright of *The Necessary Stage*; Mr Peter Tan, Singapore's Ambassador to Japan; NUS president Tan Eng Chye; Mrs Josephine Teo, Minister for Communications and Information and Second Minister for Home Affairs; Mr Low Thia Kiang, former secretary-general of the Workers' Party; Ms Denise Phua, an MP of Jalan Besar GRC and the Mayor of Central Singapore District; and Mr Bernard Toh, director of the NUS Office of Alumni Relations, at the award ceremony yesterday. PHOTO: NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF SINGAPORE

NUS faculty honours five alumni for their contributions

Josephine Teo, Low Thia Kiang and Denise Phua among those recognised by alma mater

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For their work in government, politics and advocacy, Mrs Josephine Teo, Mr Low Thia Kiang and Ms Denise Phua are among five recipients who have been recognised by their alma mater, the National University of Singapore's (NUS) Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS).

They received yesterday the FASS Distinguished Arts and Social Sciences Alumni Award 2021. Typically held annually, last year's ceremony was postponed to this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The recipients are Mrs Teo, Minister for Communications and Information and Second Minister for Home Affairs; Singapore's Ambassador to Japan Peter Tan; Mr Haresh Sharma, resident playwright of *The Necessary Stage*; Ms Phua, an MP of Jalan Besar GRC and

the Mayor of Central Singapore District; and Mr Low, former secretary-general of the Workers' Party.

In a statement, NUS president Tan Eng Chye said: "These five individuals have contributed to Singapore in distinctive ways, and their passion, perseverance and pursuit of excellence serve as an inspiration to current and future generations of FASS students."

Mrs Teo, an MP since 2006, graduated with a Bachelor of Social Sciences (Honours) in economics in 1991, winning several honours, including the Rachel Meyer Book Prize for being the best woman student. She was appointed Minister for Communications and Informa-

tion and Minister-in-charge of Smart Nation and Cybersecurity in May last year.

Formerly the minister for manpower, she also served in several ministries, such as finance, transport and foreign affairs, as well as in the Prime Minister's Office.

Mr Low, who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Chinese studies in 1981, was secretary-general of the Workers' Party between 2001 and 2018.

First elected as the MP for Hougang SMC during the 1991 General Election, Mr Low served as one of two opposition MPs between 2001 and 2011. He became an MP for Aljunied GRC in 2011,

but stepped down before the 2020 General Election, making him Singapore's longest-serving opposition MP with 29 years in service.

He said: "It is an honour to receive this award from NUS. I am heartened that my work in the opposition is recognised as a contribution to the progress of democracy in Singapore, and I hope it will encourage more individuals to step forward for this meaningful cause."

Ms Phua is best known for her advocacy for those who are disabled or have low income. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English language and political science in 1983.

She is president of the Autism Resource Centre (Singapore) and is also involved in special education schools as vice-chairman of the Eden School board and co-founder of Pathlight School.

Mr Tan, who graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Japanese studies in 1992, was appointed Singapore's Ambassador to Japan in September 2019. He also earlier served as deputy secretary for South-east Asia and Asean in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Silver) in 2008.

Mr Sharma graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in English language and English literature in 1990. He has written more than 120 plays, which have been staged in more than 20 cities, and was awarded the Cultural Medalion in 2015.

His play, *Off Centre*, was the first Singapore play selected by the Ministry of Education as a literature text at the N and O levels.

Mr Sharma is the first non-American to be invited to teach as the Goldberg Master Playwright at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts in 2011.

In 2014, he was conferred the South-east Asian Writers Award (Singapore), which recognises and honours literary excellence in the Asean region.

In a reply to *The Straits Times*, Mrs Teo said her time at FASS was one of the most enriching periods of her life.

"The hours spent in the campus libraries, robust discussions with course mates and involvement in extra-curricular activities also honed my life skills – like communications and critical thinking skills."

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