3 public service veterans top this year’s National Day Awards list

They receive the Distinguished Service Order for contributions to Singapore over the years

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Three Singaporeans with a long record of public service have been conferred the Distinguished Service Order, one of the top national honours, for their contributions to the country over the years.

They are among 6285 to get National Day honours this year.

The Distinguished Service Order, the highest accolade this year, is awarded to veteran diplomat and former Indian Heritage Centre advisory board chairman Gopinath Pillai, 84; Public Service Commission chairman Lee Tzu Yang, 67; and the Ministry of Health’s (MOH) chief health scientist Tan Chorh Chuan, 62.

Mr Pillai, a former ambassador-at-large, facilitated greater synergy and interaction between India and Singapore, according to his citation. PHOTO: COURTESY OF GOPINATH PILLAI

Public Service Commission chairman Lee Tzu Yang was recognised for his contribution to the public service, education and the arts. PHOTO: LIMHEI ZABAD

Ministry of Health chief health scientist Tan Chorh Chuan said he was thankful for the opportunity to work in areas that mean a great deal to him. PHOTO: RENDY ARANTO/WSJ

They rose to the challenge of providing medical services and medical supplies during the Covid-19 pandemic. Four veterans in their fields were conferred the next highest award, the Meritorious Service Medal. They are Mr Chan Yong Ke, permanent secretary at MOH; Dr Andrew Pang, justice of the Court of Appeal; Mr Seah Moon Ming, chairman of SMRT; and Mr David Wong, chairman of Republic Polytechnic.

Four foreign business leaders were among 67 individuals recognised with a Public Service Star for their contributions.

Mr Marcus Wallenberg, 65, a Swedish member of the Temasek International Panel, was Temasek’s first international board director, from 2008 to 2020. Said the chair of northern European financial services group SEB: “Working with Temasek and Singapore for many years has been a true pleasure, as well as an opportunity for me to widen my perspectives and learn a lot from many exceptional people.”

Sir James Dyson, 75, British founder and chairman of home appliance giant Dyson, said the award was a great honour and recognition of the whole Dyson team here. “Today, we proudly call the historic St James Power Station our global headquarters, and our wonderful Singapore engineers and scientists are delivering exciting research programmes with Singapore’s excellent universities – it is a highly supportive environment for a high-technology manufacturer,” he said.

Also recognised were Mr Shimo Yone, Singapore’s Honorary Consul-General in Osaka, Japan, who is chairman and chief executive of bicycle component manufacturing firm Shimano; and Mr Bill Winters, a member of the Monetary Authority of Singapore’s International Advisory Panel and group CEO of Standard Chartered Bank. One recipient conferred honours posthumously is Dr Agnes Koong, who was awarded the Public Administration Medal (Bronze). The former community health doctor at SingHealth Polyclinics died last year at age 44 from leukaemia. She was clinic director at Marine Parade Polyclinic from 2002 to 2019, where she oversaw the launch of a locker box service for collection of urgent medication after hours.

The late Mr Subaraj Rajah, a wildlife consultant and well-known conservationist, was conferred the Public Service Medal (Posthumous). He died in October 2019, aged 56.

His wife, former nurse Shamia Subaraj, said she and her two sons are deeply appreciative.

“It is surreal – I know he has done a lot for Singapore, especially for ecotourism. He would be chuffed, if he is listening from up there,” she said. “He made his passion his work. It resonated with him as he was also very passionate when it came to wildlife, and he lived his life fighting for the wildlife and being a voice for the animals.”
