

National Day Awards: Top honours for 3 public service veterans

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Prisca Ang

Professor Tan Chorh Chuan helped to establish various national research programmes for pandemic preparedness and vaccine development, including during the Covid-19 crisis.

Prof Tan, who became the Ministry of Health's (MOH) first chief health scientist in 2018, also played a key role in improving areas such as primary and acute care as executive director of the ministry's office for healthcare transformation.

For his many significant contributions to Singapore, he received the Distinguished Service Order, the top honour in the National Day Awards this year, from President Halimah Yacob on Sunday.

Prof Tan was also the National University of Singapore's (NUS) president from 2008 to 2017. Earlier, when he was the National University Health System's inaugural chief executive, he united the NUS medical and dental schools and the National University Hospital under a single governance board for more synergy across clinical practice, research and education. And he led Singapore's public health response to the severe acute respiratory syndrome epidemic in 2003, when he was director of medical services between 2000 and 2004.

"What was especially exciting and meaningful for me was the chance to be involved in creating and strengthening bridges between these sectors, to increase the overall impact," he told *The Straits Times* this year about serving in healthcare, research and innovation, and at NUS.

The top award also went to former ambassador-at-large Gopinath Pillai and Public Service Commission (PSC) chairman Lee Tzu Yang, as 6,258 people, including public servants and community leaders, received National Day honours across 21 award categories this year. Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong was in the audience at the ceremony, which was held at ITE College Central.

Mr Pillai served Singapore for more than three decades, both at home and abroad, and contributed significantly to Singapore's relations with South Asia. His accomplishments overseas include being the special envoy to Andhra Pradesh in India, where he advised the state government on the development of its new capital city and explored opportunities for Singapore companies to invest in the state.

"At home, Mr Pillai was a pillar of the Indian Singaporean community. He was instrumental in establishing the Indian Heritage Centre, which became a focal point for the Indian community," said his award citation, which also noted Mr Pillai's social service beyond the Indian community in roles such as the founding chairman of NTUC Fair-Price Co-operative.

As for Mr Lee Tzu Yang, he helped to improve the PSC's approach to selecting talent for the Public Service. He has been PSC chairman since 2018.

"Under his leadership, the PSC has considered scholarship candidates from a wider range of pre-tertiary institutions as well as mature students from the universities. The PSC has also revised selection tools to identify critical traits for a high-performing and more diverse Public Service," said his citation.

His other achievements include developing Singapore's arts and culture sector by chairing and steering the Esplanade since 2015 to become one of the world's busiest arts venues. He is also chair of the board of trustees of the Singapore University of Technology and Design, and the Founders' Memo-

rial Steering Committee.

Another person recognised for his contributions was Permanent Secretary for Health Chan Yeng Kit, who received the Meritorious Ser-

vice Medal. He led the whole-of-government effort to formulate and coordinate plans for Covid-19 safe management measures and the road map to a new normal, among

other achievements.

"His efforts helped enable economic and social activities to return to normal, while preventing the healthcare system from being

overwhelmed," said his citation.

The other Meritorious Service Medal recipients are Dr Andrew Phang, Justice of the Court of Appeal; Mr Seah Moon Ming, chair-

man of SMRT Corporation; and Mr David Wong, chairman of Republic Polytechnic.

prisang@sph.com.sg



Professor Tan Chorh Chuan receiving the Distinguished Service Order from President Halimah Yacob at the National Day Awards ceremony at ITE College Central on Sunday. The top award also went to former ambassador-at-large Gopinath Pillai and Public Service Commission chairman Lee Tzu Yang. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI