

Top honours for four as 6,598 receive National Day Awards

4 conferred Distinguished Service Order for their contributions to Singapore

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Four Singaporeans have been conferred the Distinguished Service Order, one of the Republic's top national honours, for their contributions to the country.

They are among 6,598 individuals who received National Day honours, such as the Public Service Star, the Public Administration Medal and the Long Service Medal, in 2023.

The Distinguished Service Order has been awarded to:

- Mr Bobby Chin Yoke Choong, 71, former chairman of the Housing Board (HDB)
- Mr Timothy James de Souza, 76, a member of the Founders' Memorial Committee
- Madam Kay Kuok Oon Kwong, 77, former chairman of the National Healthcare Group and chair of Yale-NUS College Governing Board
- Mr Kwa Chong Seng, 76, former chairman of Singapore Technologies (ST) Engineering

According to the Prime Minister's Office website, the Distinguished Service Order may be awarded to any person who has performed within Singapore any act, or series of acts, constituting distinguished conduct.

As chairman of HDB, Mr Chin led the agency in delivering affordable and accessible public housing to meet the needs of Singaporeans, read his citation. Housing policies and schemes were enhanced, and new housing typologies were introduced.

He strengthened the corporate development and governance structures within HDB with the formation of an Audit and Risk Committee to monitor and manage risks.

Under his leadership, HDB introduced the Green Finance Framework and launched its inaugural green bond in 2022.

Mr Chin also contributed extensively to Singapore's governance and development in various capacities over the years. This included serving as a member of the Council of Presidential Advisers, and as the chairman of the MediShield Life Review Committee.

Mr Chin, who stepped down as HDB chairman in March, said he was honoured and humbled to be conferred the Order, and to be given the opportunity to serve Singapore.

"I would like to dedicate the award to all at HDB, in recognition of HDB's efforts in providing quality and affordable housing for the people of Singapore," he added.

Mr de Souza said getting the Distinguished Service Order was unexpected and came as a "wonderful surprise".

For decades, he has been involved with the community in various ways, and said that his motivation has always been to care for others, especially fellow Singaporeans.

As a member of the Founders' Memorial Committee, he contributed to the conceptualisation of the memorial, through actively engaging and consulting Singaporeans.

He has also been a member of the Presidential Council for Minority Rights since 2010.

As the chairman of the Pioneer Generation and Merdeka Generation Appeals panels since 2014 and 2019 respectively, he played a pivotal role in crafting policies to manage appeals and setting up the process to do so.

Reflecting on his achievement, Mr de Souza, who was also the Eurasian Association president from 1991 to 1999, thanked the people he worked with over the years.

"This is as much for them as it is for me. Without the efforts of so many with whom I was involved in or I led as a chair, I don't think we would have made a difference."

As chairman of the National Healthcare Group (NHG) from 2009 to 2021, Madam Kuok led it through major events such as the integration of NHG and Alexandra Health System.

She also played a critical role in



As chairman of HDB, Mr Bobby Chin Yoke Choong led the agency in delivering affordable and accessible public housing. PHOTO: HDB



Madam Kay Kuok Oon Kwong's contributions spanned multiple sectors including healthcare. PHOTO: NATIONAL HEALTHCARE GROUP



Mr Timothy James de Souza is on the Founders' Memorial Committee and Presidential Council for Minority Rights. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH



Mr Kwa Chong Seng made exceptional contributions to the Singapore Public Service. PHOTO: SINGAPORE TECHNOLOGIES ENGINEERING

the set-up of the National Centre for Infectious Diseases and steering the NHG in its national Covid-19 responses, read her citation.

In her role as founding chair of the Yale-NUS College Governing Board, she ensures that the college continues to deliver quality education on a greater scale.

Her citation also noted that her contributions spanned multiple sectors such as healthcare, education and the environment.

Her involvement was at the highest levels, having chaired or served on several boards and councils of community organisations, industry groups and government bodies.

Madam Kuok said she was deeply honoured to receive the award, and grateful that she had the chance to work within the community in many sectors over the years.

She said she had learnt much through the guidance and help of the people she worked with.

Mr Kwa's citation noted that he had made exceptional contributions to national defence and the Singapore Public Service.

As chairman of ST Engineering, Mr Kwa led the company in strengthening national defence capabilities and preparedness. He was instrumental in growing critical home-grown technology and engineering manpower and expertise.

Mr Kwa said he accepted the Distinguished Service Order with "immense humility and pride".

"I feel privileged to be part of ST Engineering's transformative journey over the last decade, bearing witness to its remarkable global expansion and the technological strides it has taken to enhance Singapore's defence capabilities," he added.

The citation also highlighted his work when he was deputy chairman of the Public Service Commission.

Mr Kwa guided the public service's talent selection and development, and ensured a strong pipeline of leaders with the right qualities and values for key appointments.

Six individuals were conferred the next highest award, the Meritorious Service Medal.

Instituted in 1962, the medal may be awarded to any person who has performed service of conspicuous

merit within Singapore, characterised by resource and devotion to duty, including long service marked by exceptional ability, merit and exemplary conduct.

- The recipients are:
- Justice Chan Seng Onn, immediate past president of the Industrial Arbitration Court
 - Mr Lee Fook Sun, chairman of Ensign InfoSecurity and deputy chairman of SMRT Corporation
 - Mr Moses Lee Kim Poo, chairman of the Special Needs Trust Company and chairman of SG Enable
 - Mrs Ow Foong Pheng, Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of National Development
 - Mr Quek See Tiat, president of the Council for Estate Agencies
 - Professor Tan Thiam Soon, Institute Professor and former president of the Singapore Institute of Technology, deputy chairman of the Building Construction Authority, and a board member of the Land Transport Authority

The late Mr Palaniappan Arumugam, the former head of the National Translation Committee Tamil Resource Panel and a Parliament Tamil translator, was awarded the Public Service Star posthumously.

He made many contributions to promote the Tamil language in Singapore throughout his 50-year career in the public service.

He died in May at the age of 73. His daughter Padma, who spoke to *The Straits Times* from Melbourne, Australia, where she is based, said his family was honoured to hear the news.

She said that he would have been humbled to receive the award, but would have said that it was his duty to do what he did.

"He wanted people in Singapore to love and enjoy the language the way he did," she said. "It was his way of giving back to a country that had given him so many opportunities."

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• A full list of the 2023 National Day Award recipients is available at www.pmo.gov.sg/national-day-awards

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