

# Table tennis ace scores PSC scholarship

Isabelle Li, who will study at Yale-NUS, is only poly grad among 75 who are awarded govt scholarships this year

## Amelia Teng

Local table tennis starlet Isabelle Li cannot stop racking up the points – whether in her sport or studies.

The 20-year-old Youth Olympics and SEA Games silver medallist juggled training and studying to graduate from Republic Polytechnic (RP) last year with a near-perfect grade point average of 3.98 out of 4.

She has now become the only recipient from a polytechnic to clinch the Public Service Commission (PSC) scholarship this year.

The other 74 come from schools that offer the A levels or the International Baccalaureate and specialised schools such as NUS High School of Mathematics and Science.

Ms Li will study liberal arts at Yale-NUS College this year and is one of the six recipients who will do their undergraduate studies locally. Most are going to the United States or Britain.

Ms Li graduated from a three-year diploma course in sports and leisure management offered by RP and the Singapore Sports School.

When competing in major table tennis events, she would train 5½ hours a day for five days a week, and half a day on Saturdays.

“I learnt discipline through both studies and training,” she said. “Any spare time I had, especially on Sundays, was spent catching up on studies, or with family and friends.”

She added that she is “humbled” to be selected for the PSC scholarship. “It is not simply a career

choice but a commitment that I’ve undertaken,” she said. “Yale-NUS was my first and only choice after I read about it when it opened in 2013. I wanted to stay in Singapore so I could spend time with my parents.

“I like that Yale-NUS is in Singapore but has a residential college system and there are opportunities to explore breadth of subjects.”

She added that her new challenge will be to juggle both sport and studies in university and when she eventually joins the public service.

“I’m still exploring how I may be able to continue with training,” she said. For inspiration, she looks to the likes of former national sportsmen Ben Tan, the sailor, and swimmer Joscelin Yeo, “who have done this juggling successfully”.

This year’s recipients were selected from a pool of more than 2,400 applicants from 13 schools, including Anglo-Chinese School (Independent), St Joseph’s Institution and School of the Arts. In the past three years, seven polytechnic graduates have received the scholarships.

This is the first year that the PSC is no longer making a distinction between its Overseas Merit Scholarship and Local-Overseas Merit Scholarship schemes. Both are now called PSC scholarships.

This means scholarship holders, whether they study in Singapore or abroad, all come under one scheme.

Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, who spoke at an award ceremony at Grand Copthorne Waterfront Hotel yesterday, said the public service deals with challenges as



## COMMITMENT

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**MS ISABELLE LI**

difficult as those faced 50 years ago.

These include ensuring that less fortunate Singaporeans can still benefit from the country’s development and meeting the aspirations of a well-educated population.

“Whether we can continue to have

a good public service for the next 50 years and beyond depends very much on whether we can continue to attract, develop and retain good people in the service,” said the minister in charge of the civil service.

PSC chairman Eddie Teo was “encouraged” to see more scholarship holders in non-traditional destinations like France and New Zealand.

Ms Heng Yi Xin, who will read social work at the University of Auckland, chose New Zealand as she wanted to find out about its social policies. The 19-year-old helped out with special needs children when she was at Hwa Chong Institution.

“Social work can be applied to different ministries, such as education and manpower,” she said.

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**National player Isabelle Li at the Asian Games in Incheon, South Korea, last year. She will study liberal arts at Yale-NUS, her sole choice for university.**

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