

Order of Temasek (First Class)

Ex-minister given top civilian honour

S. Dhanabalan eighth person to get award; S R Nathan was previous recipient

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Former senior Cabinet minister S. Dhanabalan has been conferred the nation's top civilian honour, the Order of Temasek (First Class).

Mr Dhanabalan, 77, is only the eighth person in Singapore's history to receive the award. It was last given to former president S R Nathan in 2013.

Mr Dhanabalan is a member of the Council of Presidential Advisers and the Presidential Council for Minority Rights.

He tops this year's list of 3,888 National Day Award winners, who include military staff, public servants, community and grassroots leaders and educators.

Former Singapore National Employers Federation president Stephen Lee, 68, received the Order of Nila Utama (First Class), another one of Singapore's highest state awards.

Six others received the Distinguished Service Order: non-resident ambassador to Israel Winston Choo Wee Leong; non-resident ambassador to Switzerland Tee Tua Ba; chairman of the Centre for Liveable Cities advisory board Liu Thai Ker; Gardens by the Bay chief executive Tan Wee Kiat; former Tiong Bahru MP Ch'ng Jit Koon; and former senior minister of state for education and the environment

Sidek Saniff.

Sixteen people also received Commendation Medals for their contributions during the Sabah earthquake.

Mr Dhanabalan said in an e-mail that he is "gratified to be bestowed this honour".

"I have been fortunate to have worked with a team of outstanding and dedicated people whether in politics or the corporate world and we share this honour together."

"I continue to be blessed with people with the same qualities in what I am doing now."

He retired as chairman of Temasek Holdings in 2013 after a 17-year tenure.

This came after a career spanning over five decades in the private sector and in politics, 15 of them as a minister from 1978 to 1993.

He was also the chairman of Singapore Airlines from 1996 to 1998 and chairman of DBS Group Holdings from 1999 to 2005.

Mr Dhanabalan was appointed to the board of Singapore sovereign wealth fund GIC last August.

He was among the founding board of directors when GIC was established in 1981, and had served until 2005.

GIC group president and former civil service head Lim Siong Guan said Mr Dhanabalan "possesses an abiding sense of duty to do all he can for Singapore's future".

"Mr Dhanabalan's deep understanding of the country's reserve management goals means Singaporeans today, our children, and our children's children continue to be in the forefront of his dedicated service to the nation," he added.

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Temasek chairman Lim Boon Heng said Mr Dhanabalan played a key role in shaping the investment company's "values and ethos as an active investor and shareholder, a forward-looking institution and a trusted steward".

"He was a leader, a mentor and a steward, steering the company through our transformative years against the backdrop of globalisation and volatility. His exemplary service as one of Singapore's outstanding leaders continues to be an inspiration to us all," Mr Lim added.

Mr Peter Seah, who is the chairman of DBS Bank, said that Mr Dhanabalan made significant contributions as one of the founding members of DBS.

"In the early years, we were known as the Development Bank of Singapore. He personally wrote the bank's prospectus and was instrumental in securing credit lines for the bank," Mr Seah added.

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• A full list of this year's National Day Award recipients is available at the Prime Minister's Office website: www.pmo.gov.sg/national-day-awards



Mr S. Dhanabalan, a member of the Council of Presidential Advisers and the Presidential Council for Minority Rights, tops this year's list of 3,888 National Day Award winners, who include military staff, public servants, community and grassroots leaders and educators. ST FILE PHOTO

Order of Nila Utama (First Class)

Ex-SNEF president lauded



Mr Stephen Lee had a key role in shaping employment policies as Singapore National Employers Federation president from 1988 to last year. ST FILE PHOTO

Jasmine Osada

They spent their careers shaping Singapore into what it is today. And as the nation celebrates its Golden Jubilee, the pioneer-generation contributors who have helped to make it happen are being recognised with top honours at the National Day Awards.

Joining a small group of Singaporeans who have been conferred the Order of Nila Utama (First Class) – one of Singapore's highest state awards – is Mr Stephen Lee.

The 68-year-old former president of the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) was nominated by the Ministry of Manpower in recognition of his contributions and commitment to industrial relations, tripartism and the Singapore economy.

As president of the federation from 1988 to last year, Mr Lee played a key role in shaping employment policies to benefit both employers and employees.

"He also contributed significantly to the National Wages Council, where he pushed for wage reform, by restructuring wages from a seniority-based wage structure to a flexible and performance-based wage system today," a spokesman for the ministry said.

Mr Lee said that winning the award "is a recognition of the contribution by SNEF in building a strong tripartite partnership in Singapore". He added: "There are new challenges facing the tripartite partners. The long-term objectives however, remain the same – the provision of good-quality jobs for our workers and the equitable sharing of the fruits of our economic success."

Among those who have been conferred the Distinguished Service Order this year are Dr Liu Thai Ker, chairman of the Centre for Liveable Cities advisory board, Mr Tee Tua Ba, non-resident ambassador to Switzerland, and Dr Tan Wee Kiat, chief executive officer of Gardens by the Bay.

The National Day Awards will be given out at an investiture ceremony later this year.

For Dr Liu, the award came "as a totally pleasant surprise".

The former head of the Housing Development Board, who pioneered the building of high-rise homes, counts his time there as the most rewarding in his career.

"I often bump into total strangers who thank me for giving them a good home," said Dr Liu, 77. "That is a very heartwarming experience."

Former Commissioner of Police Mr Tee, 73, credited his award to the teams he has worked with.

"In the early days, the police force was not respected by the people," he recalled.

"During the colonial times, people even called the police 'running dogs'. But through community policing, we have managed to cultivate a relationship with the public to turn the police force's image from a negative one into a positive one."

Dr Tan, who previously headed the National Parks Board for 16 years, said that turning Singapore into a "city in a garden" is one of his proudest achievements.

"I've always felt very grateful to work in my dream job," said the 72-year-old.

"To be recognised for what I do on top of it is icing on the cake."

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Distinguished Service Order

Long-time MPs' grassroots work recognised



Former senior ministers of state Sidek Saniff and Ch'ng Jit Koon were two of six recipients of the award. PHOTOS: ST FILE, THE NEW PAPER FILE



Leong Weng Kam and Choo Yun Ting

Veteran politicians Ch'ng Jit Koon and Sidek Saniff were two of six recipients of the Distinguished Service Order at this year's National Day Awards.

The former senior ministers of states were honoured for their grassroots work as long-time MPs. Both Mr Ch'ng, 81, and Mr Sidek, 77, are stalwarts of their respective ethnic communities and have a combined 54 years in Parliament under their belts.

Mr Sidek was conferred the award for his role as a former adviser to the Aljunied Grassroots Organisations. He served as an MP in Aljunied GRC from 1997-2001 after spending five earlier terms in Kolam Ayer, Jalan Besar GRC and Eunos GRC.

A founding member of the Malay/Muslim self-help group Mendaki, Mr Sidek served in the Environment and Education Ministries as an office holder.

In his 10-year stint with the latter ministry, he played a key role in narrowing the gap between the academic performance of Malay and non-Malay students.

Mr Ch'ng was conferred the award for his role as a former adviser to the Tiong Bahru, Bukit Merah and Tanjong Pagar Grassroots Organisations. He was an MP in these constituencies at different points over 28 years in politics, starting in 1968 among the first batches of PAP cadres.

A former senior minister of state for community development, Mr Ch'ng was entrusted by founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew with the task of connecting government leaders to the people, especially the Chinese ground. To that end, he initiated the practice of ministerial walkabouts, which is still carried out today.

When contacted, both men expressed surprise at the award and said that they felt undeserving.

"I have left political office for nearly 20 years now, and I am really surprised to be given such a great honour," said Mr Ch'ng, who

retired in 1996. "It is good to be remembered, but I still think I don't deserve it because I was just doing my job, first as an MP and a backbencher in Parliament, and later an office holder in government."

Mr Sidek, who retired in 2001, said he was "thankful and humbled". "Whatever they say I've done, I could not have done it alone," he said.

"My contributions were normal and nothing extraordinary. What I've done with my colleagues is like that in any other constituency – to look after the residents."

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Meritorious Service Medal (Military)

Send-off for defence chief



Chief of Defence Force Ng Chee Meng speaking to commandos during a training session last year. He will retire from the SAF on Aug 18. ST FILE PHOTO

Ng Huiwen

Chief of Defence Force Ng Chee Meng received a state send-off after he was awarded the Pingat Jasa Gemilang (Tentera) – the Meritorious Service Medal (Military) – at this year's National Day Awards.

Lieutenant-General Ng, 47, who became Singapore's eighth defence chief in 2013, will retire from the SAF on Aug 18. He is the first defence chief in more than 10 years to be appointed from the air force, where he served as chief for more than three years.

His exit has fuelled speculation that he is likely to stand for the PAP in the coming general election. If so, he will be the highest-ranking military officer and the first defence chief to enter politics.

Lt-Gen Ng, who was awarded the SAF Overseas Training Award, graduated from the US Air Force Academy and has a Master of Arts (Inter-

national Relations) from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. During his 29 years serving in the military, he has commanded the 144th Squadron, which operates the F-5 Tigers, as well as Changi Air Base.

He has also served as head of the air plan department and as director of joint operations. He was Military Private Secretary to the Defence Minister from December 1995 to July 1996. As defence chief, he most recently led the preparations for the state funeral of Singapore founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

"I dedicate this award to our servicemen and women, both past and present," said Lt-Gen Ng. "It is a recognition of their service... I am humbled and grateful to have served alongside them."

Some 554 individuals receiving National Day Honours this year are from the military.

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