



This year's President's Scholars are (from far right) Ms Tan Xin Hwee, Mr Alden Tan Ming Yang, Ms Sharmaine Koh Mingli, Mr Stefan Liew Jing Rui and Ms Shi Peng Yi Penny. Ms Koh is also a Singapore Armed Forces Scholarship recipient, while Mr Tan and Mr Liew are also recipients of the Singapore Police Force Scholarship.  
ST PHOTO: GAVIN FOO

# Hold on to values Singapore was built on: President

She highlights need to give back in message to President's Scholars

Jolene Ang

In the face of disruptive changes, the new generation of leaders must hold on to what is evergreen – values, character and commitment.

It was through perseverance, determination and foresight that our pioneers built a nation based on meritocracy, integrity and impartiality, said President Halimah Yacob.

"We must never forget or abandon these values," she told the newest batch of President's Scholarship recipients at the award ceremony at the Istana yesterday.

"The challenges will be different, but our values will be what unite us and keep us strong. We must not let the tides of change divide us."

Also at the ceremony were Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, Minister for Trade and Industry and Minister-in-charge of the Public Service

CONNECT WITH THE GROUND

As leaders of tomorrow, you will be responsible for rallying your fellow citizens to work together. To do this, you must remain closely connected to the ground, and serve with dedication and humility.



**PRESIDENT HALIMAH YACOB**, in her message to the newest batch of President's Scholars.

Chan Chun Sing, Education Minister Ong Ye Kung, Second Minister for Education and Finance Indranee Rajah and Public Service Commission (PSC) chairman Lee Tzu Yang.

Madam Halimah said the President's Scholars would have to lead Singaporeans to tackle challenges.

"As leaders of tomorrow, you will be responsible for rallying your fellow citizens to work together. To do this, you must remain closely connected to the ground, and serve with dedication and humility."

Securing the scholarship and achieving great heights in education or career are not ends in themselves, she said. "We must expect our best and brightest who have benefited from the system to also contribute more to our society."

Madam Halimah also paid tribute to Mr Eddie Teo, who retired as PSC chairman last month. Noting that he has been responsible for select-

ing President's Scholars for the past decade, she said: "His work has ensured that Singapore continues to attract and retain a fair share of talent in the public service."

This year's five scholarship recipients, all 19, are Mr Stefan Liew Jing Rui from River Valley High School, Mr Alden Tan Ming Yang and Ms Tan Xin Hwee from Raffles Institution, as well as Ms Sharmaine Koh Mingli and Ms Shi Peng Yi Penny from Hwa Chong Institution.

Ms Koh, also a recipient of the Singapore Armed Forces Scholarship, will read history and politics at Yale University. She said her decision to enlist in the army stemmed partly from her interest in history. "(National security) is something we should not take for granted today, as we continue to defend our independence and way of life," said Ms Koh.

Ms Shi, who will read urban studies at Stanford University, said her course incorporates elements of disciplines such as economics and anthropology which would put her in good stead to serve the public. She said: "I hope to have a chance to contribute in urban planning and make Singapore a more inclusive space."

Mr Tan will study economics, statistics and data science at Yale University, while Mr Liew will study liberal arts at Yale-NUS College. Both are also recipients of the Singapore Police Force Scholarship.

Ms Tan will read psychology and philosophy at Oxford University. The most prestigious of all PSC undergraduate awards, the President's Scholarship has been given out since 1966. Four to six scholarships have been awarded each year for the past 10 years.

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## Scholarship recipient chooses local university

As a recipient of the President's Scholarship, he could have chosen to go to almost any university in the world.

But Mr Stefan Liew Jing Rui, who is also a Singapore Police Force scholarship holder, is choosing to stay true to his roots – he has enrolled in local liberal arts college Yale-NUS.

He is one of five recipients this year of the President's Scholarship, the most prestigious of all undergraduate awards given out by the Public Service Commission.

Said Mr Liew, 19, who was formerly from the River Valley High School Integrated Programme: "A liberal arts college will provide me with a different perspective."

Mr Liew, who was president of his school's student council, added: "Spending six years in River Valley... some might say it could be an echo chamber, and I have to break through that bubble."

He decided to sign on with the police force after a short internship last December during which he went on patrols. He said that he was inspired by the work done by the police and the fact that they worked with a wide range of organisations.

Going to Yale-NUS College will also allow him to stay close to his family, said Mr Liew.

After his parents separated when he was 13, Mr Liew and his elder brother were brought up by

their father, a production manager at an electronics company.

It was not a glamorous job, but his father earned enough to give them a stable life, said Mr Liew.

And that taught him the importance of family.

"Pursuing (academic) excellence does not have to come at the expense of losing precious family time," he said.

"My father put in a lot of effort to give us a future he could never experience," he said, adding that his father considered quitting his job at one point, but carried on for the sake of his family.

Seeing his father carry out his duty to the family cultivated a sense of responsibility in Mr Liew, who often volunteers for social and environmental causes.

"My family is just one of thousands around Singapore, and all these families have different stories. Some of them may be in even less privileged situations."

His personal goal, he said, is to learn to appreciate these hidden stories even more, through volunteering for different local causes.

The last President's Scholarship recipient to study in a local university was Mr Arturo Neo from Hwa Chong Institution, who was awarded the scholarship in 2014 to study medicine at the National University of Singapore.

Jolene Ang