

# Tony Tan receives top honour for service to Singapore

✓ SEOWBEIYI

Nearly 10 years before the National Gallery Singapore opened its doors to the public in 2015, then chief executive of the Singapore Exchange Hsieh Fu Hua was asked to join a committee in charge of shaping it.

It became one of his longest engagements. This year, Mr Hsieh, 68, marks his fifth year as chairman of the iconic gallery, which houses the largest public collection of modern art in South-east Asia.

For his contributions, Mr Hsieh received a Meritorious Service Medal yesterday.

He was one of 518 recipients conferred awards by President Halimah Yacob, with former president Tony Tan Keng Yam heading the list. The ceremony was held at the Institute of Technical Education College Central.

Mr Hsieh's citation says he "rallied corporates and philanthropists to support the gallery's permanent galleries, exhibitions and programmes".

Mr Hsieh told *The Straits Times*: "The building of a museum is a very long journey. You only have to look around the world to realise that good or great museums come about over decades, and with the work of generations of people."

Yesterday, Dr Tan, 78, the Republic's former president, became the ninth Singaporean to receive the



President Halimah Yacob giving the Order of Temasek (First Class) award to Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam. TNP PHOTO: **ARIFFIN JAMAR**

nation's highest civilian honour – the Order of Temasek (First Class) – "for his lifetime dedication to public service and his stellar service to his people and country".

Dr Tan, whose public service career spanned nearly four decades, helped transform Singapore's education system, armed forces, reserve management and research and development efforts.

"The breadth and sweep of his service have been equalled by few," his citation reads.

He left his job as OCBC Bank's general manager in 1979 to enter politics and went on to helm five ministries. He has been credited with revamping the school system as education minister, championing the development of higher education, as well as laying the basis for Singa-

pore's universities to raise their international standing. He was elected Singapore's seventh president, serving from 2011 to last year.

The next highest award given out yesterday was the Distinguished Service Order, conferred to the Singapore University of Technology and Design's former chairman Philip Ng Chee Tat, and National University of Singapore Board of Trustees' former chairman Wong Ngit Liong.

Mr Ng, 59, is chief executive of property giant Far East Organization while Mr Wong, 77, founded and heads electronics manufacturer Venture Corporation.

There were five other Meritorious Service Medal recipients this year.

They are: co-chairmen of the Religious Rehabilitation Group, Ustaz Ali Haji Mohamed and Ustaz Mohamad Hasbi Hassan; Permanent Secretary for Finance and Permanent Secretary (special duties) in the Prime Minister's Office Tan Ching Yee; head of civil service Leo Yip Seng Cheong; and Centre for Liveable Cities executive director Khoo Teng Chye.

The 2018 National Day Awards also paid tribute to two groups that had separately worked on the Trump-Kim Summit, as well as the Pedra Branca case – which saw the International Court of Justice award sovereignty to Singapore in 2008.

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