

Ex-senior minister conferred highest civilian honour

S. Jayakumar, who served in Cabinets of all three prime ministers, heads list of National Day Award recipients

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Former senior minister S. Jayakumar, who served in the Cabinets of all three of Singapore's prime ministers, headed the list of recipients of the National Day Award yesterday.

He was conferred the Order of Temasek (With High Distinction), the highest civilian honour, for his "wide-ranging, invaluable, and unique contributions to the well-being and security of Singapore".

The investiture ceremony, postponed from last year, was held at the Institute of Technical Education College Central, for more than 500 recipients of the higher honours. In all, a total of 5,472 individuals in 24 award categories received National Day honours.

President Halimah Yacob gave out the awards to recipients, who were reminded not to shake hands, a standard precaution amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Guests in the audience, including Prime Minister Lee Hsien



President Halimah Yacob presenting Professor S. Jayakumar with the Order of Temasek (With High Distinction). TNP PHOTO: **CHONG JUN LIANG**

Loong, Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat as well as former prime minister Goh Chok Tong and former president Tony Tan, were subject to safe management measures.

They had to undergo Covid-19 rapid-antigen tests and were seated a distance apart.

PM Lee said in a Facebook post after the event: "We postponed the ceremony last year due to the pandemic, so I was glad we could now present the

awards in-person, split over two sessions for everyone's safety."

Professor Jayakumar, 81, was commended for having "given his entire life to the service of Singapore".

He has served as a diplomat and minister in a public service career spanning more than 30 years, and was a key negotiator and legal adviser on important issues such as the Defence Cooperation Agreement and Extradition Treaty with Indonesia and

the Pedra Branca dispute with Malaysia.

On the ceremony, Prof Jayakumar said: "It was an unusual personal experience because in my 30 years as a minister, I attended this ceremony to witness others getting awards.

"I was immensely satisfied to be in the company of so many others from all walks of life who have contributed in their own ways, touched the lives of others and helped our country."

Others who received top honours were social service stalwart, Mr Koh Choon Hui, 79, as well as one of the world's foremost historians, Professor Wang Gungwu, 90.

In a Facebook post, President Halimah said: "Our public service officers deserve this recognition and honour for their selfless contributions to Singapore's development and growth in various sectors.

"I hope they will continue with their service to Singapore as we work towards the next phase of nation-building."

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