

# 12 receive SPH Media's journalism scholarships

This is over twice the number last year, as it seeks to recruit and retain talent

Wallace Woon

In May, when Malaysia announced its ban on chicken exports, intern reporter Deon Loke was sent to speak to chicken rice hawkers, chicken vendors and customers to get their reactions.

"I had worked on several stories already, but this was the first time I was working on a big package," said the 19-year-old, who studied at Eunoia Junior College.

"I'm usually quite introverted, so talking to so many people did not come easy. But it was a challenge I was able to overcome."

The developing situation meant she had to revisit many people she had interviewed, and she was dubbed the "chicken reporter" in the newsroom.

Ms Loke is one of 12 recipients of the SPH Media journalism scholarship this year. She will begin her studies next month at King's College London, where she will read English.

This year, SPH Media gave out more than twice the number of such scholarships than it did last



(From far left) Ms Deon Loke, Mr Bryan Cheong and Mr Elijah Wong are the three journalism scholarship recipients from The Straits Times. Another seven of the scholarships went to recipients from the Chinese Media Group. The remaining two scholarships were awarded to a recipient each from Berita Harian and Tamil Murasu.  
ST PHOTO: DIOS VINCOY JR

year, when only five were awarded.

A total of 38 scholarships were given out by SPH Media and the Singapore Press Holdings Foundation during an award ceremony yesterday. The awards include scholarships for children of serving employees and the Lim Kim San Memorial Scholarships, which are given out by the SPH Foundation.

Speaking at the ceremony, SPH Media Trust chairman Khaw Boon Wan cited two reasons for re-launching the scholarships with a bigger budget.

"First, we are in the business of producing quality journalism... Our business, therefore, depends on our ability to recruit and retain the talent to join us in our mission.

"Second, we want to send a strong signal to our colleagues and our audience that we are serious in pursuing our mission."

This year, there were 126 applications for the journalism scholarship, almost three times the 44 applications received last year.

Ms Loke and Mr Bryan Cheong and Mr Elijah Wong, both 21, are the

three scholarship recipients from The Straits Times. Another seven of the scholarships went to recipients from the Chinese Media Group.

The remaining two scholarships were awarded to Mr Muhammad Danial Afiq Faharick, 21, from Malay-language publication Berita Harian and Mr Yugesk Kannan, 21, from Tamil-language publication Tamil Murasu.

On being Tamil Murasu's first scholarship recipient, Mr Yugesk said: "It's a huge responsibility. It means I will set the benchmark

and be an example for all future scholarship holders coming to the publication."

Chinese Media Group scholarship holder Wong Jun Heng, who interned at Chinese-language newspaper Shin Min Daily News from last December to March this year, said the stint boosted his confidence and helped him overcome his fear of rejection.

"I applied for the scholarship as I wanted to contribute to society by being a voice for the people," said the 19-year-old, who is currently

doing his national service.

Two fellowships, the first of their kind, were awarded to veteran journalists: Ms Tham Yuen-C, a senior political correspondent at The Straits Times, and Mr Ng Soon Kiat, associate digital content editor at Lianhe Zaobao.

The fellowships are a collaboration between the SPH Media Academy and the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism at Britain's Oxford University.

wallacewoon@sph.com.sg