

**SPEECH BY 1ST ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL
MR HENG SWEE KEAT
AT PEOPLE'S ACTION PARTY AWARDS CEREMONY 2021
ON SATURDAY, 27 NOVEMBER 2021, AFTERNOON SESSION**

Party Chairman Gan Kim Yong,

Fellow Comrades,

Introduction

Good afternoon.

1. The last time we got to meet like this was two years ago! So much has happened since. And I am very glad that we are able to safely gather in person again today.
2. COVID-19 struck a few months after the last Party Awards Ceremony, upending lives and livelihoods. As the Government, we rallied the entire nation to respond to the crisis. As Finance Minister, I rolled out an unprecedented five Budgets in one year, marshalling resources for public health measures, and providing support for Singaporeans and businesses.
3. We were able to do all this without incurring a cent of debt for future generations to repay, because we were able to fund a large part of this using past reserves. We deeply appreciate the foresight and prudence of our founding leaders – Mr Lee Kuan Yew and his team, and our earlier generations who supported them. Our reserves provided a solid protection for us during this storm.

4. Last year, we fought a very tough GE, under extraordinary circumstances. Thanks to our comrades rising to the occasion and their hard work, we secured a clear mandate, although our vote share was lower than we had hoped for.
5. Earlier this year, much of the developed world thought it had turned the corner on the pandemic. Then the Delta variant emerged, resulting in new global waves of infection. Singapore was not spared.
6. We went through several rounds of tightening measures, and redoubled efforts to get our people vaccinated. More than 85% of our population is now fully vaccinated, one of the highest in the world. Many have gone on to get their booster shots. Everyone has also done their part to keep everyone safe by taking the precautionary measures seriously. We have an excellent and dedicated healthcare team, and though our healthcare system came under strain, it had not been overwhelmed. Our death rate from COVID-19 is among the lowest in the world.
7. This has enabled us to gradually re-open and resume activities, including today's Party Awards. Two years on, we are still learning to live with COVID-19. There is still much uncertainty ahead, and we must expect more curveballs. The latest COVID-19 variant B.1.1.529 has been designated by the WHO as a variant of concern. But we must learn to live with COVID-19 and do our best to return to normalcy.

Celebrating our people

8. COVID-19 is not the only crisis that Singapore faced. Through past crises, like SARS and the Asian Financial Crisis, Singaporeans have time and again trusted the PAP to lead the country. This is because each generation of activists has continued to serve passionately and wholeheartedly, always with the best interests of Singaporeans at heart.

9. You adapted as our society evolved, while keeping faith with the PAP's founding values and convictions. You continue to sustain our engagement efforts, including through online means, and serve our residents well. Your efforts have helped the Party to deepen our understanding of people's concerns, better support those in need, and strengthen our bonds with fellow Singaporeans.
10. The Party will not be where we are today, without your unwavering support. So today is a celebration of you – our activists. Life as we know it may have changed, but I am heartened that your conviction, hopes and shared dreams for a better Singapore remain steadfast. This year, we will be giving out [672] awards to party activists.

Award Recipients

11. I am glad that we have been able to count on activists from diverse backgrounds and all ages. Let me share the experiences and aspirations of some of our activists.
12. Comrade Sim Cheng Yu, at 27 years old, is our youngest award recipient this year. He started volunteering with the Boon Lay Branch 10 years ago. I am glad that to him, age has never been a barrier in serving Singaporeans. Amid the pandemic, he took action to launch a programme called Belanja a Meal, providing support for hawkers and lower income households. Today, he will be receiving the Youth Medal.
13. Comrade Hamidah Aidillah, a Women's Wing activist from Keat Hong. Over the past 13 years, she had to deal with many difficult community cases. Earlier this year, she contributed to the discussions leading up to the Women's Wing and Young PAP's Paper on Women's Development. She is also supporting the Party's on-going #ActionForHer movement. Hamidah receives the Women's Medal today.
14. Our longest-serving award recipient for this year is Comrade Yong Kim. He joined the party in 1963 and has been actively serving the Party through crises and change. His

enthusiasm and dedication have inspired many younger activists at Marsiling. Comrade Yong will be receiving the Dedicated Service Star Award, although he is not here today. We thank him for six decades of commitment to the Party.

Commendation Medal

15. Let me now say a few words about our two Commendation Medal recipients – Comrade Molly Too and Comrade Jason Tan.
16. Comrade Molly joined the Party in the year the PAP Women’s Wing was formed – in 1989. She served in the Women’s Wing in various capacities over the last 32 years, reaching out to Singaporean women from all walks of life. Today, she is also actively involved in the PAP Seniors Group, and serves as the Assistant Secretary of the PAP Marsiling Branch. Fellow comrades described her as the backbone of support during last year’s GE campaigning.
17. Comrade Jason joined the Party in 1976. What has given him the most satisfaction is being able to resolve the challenges faced by the many residents he has served over the years. This has kept him going over his 45 years of service. Comrade Jason is currently the Vice Chairman of the Siglap branch, and he played a key role in organising last year’s campaign activities in the fiercely contested East Coast GRC.

Conclusion

18. To all of you here and joining us virtually, we thank you for your contributions and support. As we forge ahead, your commitment to work as a collective, across activists from different backgrounds and wards, will be more important than ever. With party activists acting as one and fully behind the party leadership, we can devote our full attention to chart a course out of the pandemic into a better future.

19. If we continue to serve Singaporeans wholeheartedly and always embody the best of our values – we can continue to earn their trust and support in taking on the big challenges ahead. Together, we can keep Singapore united and ensure that every Singaporean has a stake in our nation's success for a long time to come.

20. Thank you.