

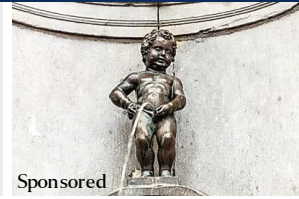
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## Stars in the spotlight



Dr Desmond Rodney Lim, 47, senior director at DSO National Laboratories (DSO) is currently seconded to the Defence Science and Technology Agency (DSTA) as director, Advanced Systems. He won the YSA in 2003 and was part of a team that clinched the President's Technology Award in 2016. He says: "There is no substitute for passion, hard work and resilience in overcoming difficulties. I was fortunate to be given many opportunities to explore diverse disciplines, from photonics, communication systems, to sensor systems. I got to work in academia, government service and a start-up. Through the years, I developed a good scientific foundation and acquired a 'toolkit' of skill sets which served me well across the different roles I took on."

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## On its 10th anniversary, past winners of the President's Science and Technology Awards talk about their inspirations and how Singapore's investment in research and development has borne fruit

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Esther Teo

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Their life's work touches us in many unseen ways, from fighting blindness to creating Singapore's first commercial earth observation satellite.

Each year, outstanding individuals in the fields of science and engineering are feted during the President's Science and Technology Awards (PSTA).

Previously known as the National Science and Technology Awards from 1987 to 2008, they were elevated to the status of the President's awards — the nation's highest scientific honours — in 2009.

S&T [Science & Technology] has become an integral pillar of our economy as companies move up the value chain to undertake more capital-, tech- and innovation-intensive activities. We have put in place a strong environment for Intellectual Property protection and enforcement, and established a network of public and private sector R&D centres that work together to develop and commercialise new technologies, processes and products. These efforts are underpinned by our long term investment in training skilled science and technology manpower in our schools, universities and research institutes.

- Mr Lim Hng Kiang, Special Advisor, Ministry of Trade and Industry, in his first PSTA speech in 2009

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PSTA Chairman Tan Gee Paw says: “Science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) is the pillar of our intellectual capital. The PSTA, being the pinnacle awards, play a critical role in recognising this.”

A\*STAR Chairman Lim Chuan Poh says: “The PSTA reflects the meaningful contributions of Singapore's scientific talents and gives a glimpse of the diverse fields and capabilities across our public research institutes, institutes of higher learning, as well as the hospitals and clinical community. The starting point is always excellent science, and the end goal is to bring benefits to our economy and society. The PSTA winners continue to make an impact on Singapore and beyond, and their ongoing endeavours and achievements add to Singapore's reputation as a global talent hub and an emerging innovation and enterprise ecosystem.”

## From strength to strength

### **PSTA in numbers (2009-2017)**

PSTA given out 34

PSTM winners 11

PSA winners 20

PTA winners 28

YSA given out 28

Since its inception, a total of 34 awards have been conferred at PSTA on individuals and teams for their outstanding and invaluable contributions to the research and development landscape in Singapore.

PSTA constitute three different categories — the President's Science and Technology Medal (PSTM), the President's Science Award (PSA) and the President's Technology Award (PTA).

The late Professor Miranda Yap received the first PSTM award in 2009 and remains the only female recipient to date. She was the executive director of A\*STAR's Bioprocessing Technology Institute as well as the A\*STAR Graduate Academy.

Prof Yap was recognised for her distinguished contributions to Singapore's biomedical sciences landscape.

Her husband Professor Yap Kian Tong, a retired lecturer, remembers her tenacity and influence on the scientific community here: "Many are lulled into assuming that getting scientific funding in Singapore is always easy, and that it provides the motivation for innovative thinking, but it is actually the other way around."



Prof Yap made distinguished contributions to Singapore's biomedical sciences landscape. PHOTO: ST FILE

“Even when faced with no funding or other difficulties, Miranda would persist in research and pursue her passions. She would still push her convictions and the many valuable insights she gained from colleagues from all over the world.”

The 2018 PSTA and Young Scientist Awards (YSA) ceremony will be held next Tuesday. The YSA, which are also presented at the PSTA ceremony, are conferred on young researchers aged 35 and below, who are actively engaged in R&D in Singapore, and have shown great potential to be world-class researchers in their fields of expertise.

Visit <https://app.a-star.edu.sg/psta/PSTA10A> for more from past PSTA winners.

**Additional reporting by Michelle Chin and Joshua Wong**

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