

DSO team key to SAF readiness amid pandemic gets award

With its mission of keeping the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) operationally ready despite the threat of infectious diseases, the biological defence programme team at DSO National Laboratories kicked into high gear last December when Covid-19 emerged in China.

In January, the team embarked on several studies with the National Centre for Infectious Diseases to look into the transmission risks of the disease.

In March, it developed its own direct polymerase chain reaction test which could deliver results quicker and without the need for some reagents.

Yesterday, the biological defence programme team was awarded the Defence Technology Prize.

Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen said these testing capabilities gave the SAF confidence that it could detect cases early if needed, including when teams went to migrant worker dormitories in April and took care of patients in community care facilities. "That confidence makes a difference in our operations," he added.

Associate Professor Tan Boon Huan, 50, director of DSO's biological defence programme, said her team's role in the national Covid-19 effort was the result of capabilities built up over the years. "Our scientists may be tired after so many months, but the passion they have for their work is still there," she said.

Lim Min Zhang



Associate Professor Tan Boon Huan (front row, right), director of DSO National Laboratories' biological defence programme, with members of her winning team at a DSO lab in Kent Ridge. She said her team's role in the national Covid-19 effort was the result of capabilities built up over the years.

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