

**Dr Mariam Aljunied
pictured below receiving her NDA
for public service to children with
special educational needs from the
President of Singapore**



**Click to the next page to see an article on the
National Day Awards – the Singaporean
equivalent of MBEs**

NATION'S HEROES

Flashback to the year 1965. Separated from Malaysia, Singapore is celebrating its first independence day. Then President, Yusof bin Ishak, steps on the podium, amidst the rousing applause to give out Singapore's inaugural National Day Awards (NDA). At least that's what I imagine the ceremony to reward the various types of merit and service to the nation would have been like.

Both Singaporeans and non-Singaporeans are entitled to receive the NDA. To honour their outstanding contribution in the civil or military service, social and community work or commendable performance in fields such as science, business or the arts, 19 categories of awards have been established since 1962.

Of which, the Star of Temasek (Bintang Temasek) is the most prestigious award as it is given to any member of the Singapore Armed Forces, the Singapore Police Force or the Singapore Civil Defence Force who has displayed valour or devotion to his duty in times of danger. The lowest of the awards is the Long Service Medal (Pingat Bakti Setia). People who are working in the public service, bodies that are rendering educational services or government-related organisations that have served for at least 25 years are eligible to win this award.

While most of the awards are given to efforts displayed within Singapore, exceptions may be made like for The Conspicuous Gallantry Medal (Pingat Gagah Perkas), which recognises people who have displayed ineffable courage in the face of extreme personal danger within Singapore, and in special circumstances outside the nation. Awards may be given out posthumously such as The Medal of Honour (Pingat Kehormatan), to commend members of the Singapore Armed Forces or the Singapore Police Force who may have sacrificed their lives during their call of duty.

For awards like The Order of Temasek (Darjah Utama Temasek), there are three grades, depending on the honouring

capacity. From First to Third class, recipients may receive the Badge and the Star of the Order or just the Badge of the Order alone. The class also determines how the award is to be worn. The award is bestowed by the President, on the advice of the Prime Minister.

Spanning a period of four to five months, nominations of the NDA go through a very stringent selection where the approval of the President is required. The process begins from February to April each year, where ministries, statutory boards and grassroots organisations make nominations for the awards and the nominations are short-listed by the government's personnel boards and ad hoc committees. These recommendations are submitted to the Cabinet for clearance and sent to the President's office for final approval. The names of the winners are announced on 9 August.

Each year, about 3,000 people receive the awards with a majority of the recipients receiving the Long Service Award. As the award consists of both a medal and a collar pin, the medal can be worn at national and distinguished functions such as the National Day Parade while the pin can be worn at all times. Recipients often use the awarded titles given to them. For example, Alan Tan who is awarded with the Public Service Medal can be addressed as Alan Tan, PBM.

Grassroot leaders are entitled to two categories of awards, namely the Public Service Star (Bintang Bakti Masyarakat, BBM)

As we celebrate the nation's birthday, let's not forget to honour those who have made significant contributions to make our country a better place. Text **Sherene Kang**



**PRESIDENT
S R NATHAN
GIVING OUT THE
DISTINGUISHED
AWARDS.**

