

Awards for Cham Tao Soon and Tan Gee Paw for their role in engineering profession



Professor Cham Tao Soon (left) and veteran civil servant Tan Gee Paw received the Distinguished Professional Engineer Award during the Professional Engineers Board's Day of Dedication on Nov 17, 2018. PHOTOS: LIM YAOHUI, PUB

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[Melody Zaccheus](#)

SINGAPORE - He helped set up the then University of Singapore's Faculty of Engineering and went on to become the founding president of Nanyang Technological University, building up the institution over the next 22 years.

Professor Cham Tao Soon, 79, later also became the [founding chancellor of UniSIM](#), and played a key role in the formation of the Singapore University of Social Sciences.

He was presented with the Distinguished Professional Engineer Award at a ceremony on Saturday (Nov 17) to recognise his outstanding achievements in engineering, management, research and development and entrepreneurship, as well as his services to the engineering profession.

Presenting the award to him, Mr Zaqy Mohamad, Minister of State for National Development and Manpower, said that, with so many institutes of higher learning under Prof Cham's belt, it was no wonder he is known as the "educator of the century".

The event, the Professional Engineers Board's Day of Dedication, was held at Pan Pacific Singapore. The day recognises the role and contributions of professional engineers towards the development of Singapore's built environment.

The other winner of the award was veteran civil servant Tan Gee Paw, 75, who [retired last year as chairman of national water agency PUB](#).

Mr Zaqy commended Mr Tan for solving many of the nation's engineering problems including the development of Singapore's water infrastructure. For instance, in 2003, Mr Tan's team [delivered Newater](#). He was also the engineer behind the clean-up of Singapore River and Kallang Basin in the 1970s.

Mr Zaqy said the two men "devoted their illustrious careers to the betterment of the engineering profession, and ultimately, the transformation of Singapore into a modern city".

Professor Cham said he was happy to receive the award. Under his watch, top engineers such as Temasek Holdings chief executive Ho Ching and Kwa Chong Seng, the chairman of the Singapore Exchange, were groomed. "I'm happy that my contributions in producing top engineers for Singapore have been acknowledged."

In his speech, Mr Zaqy noted that several trends and challenges lie ahead.

First, he said the community, as a result of climate change, needs to design and build infrastructure that can withstand stronger winds, more intense rainfall, and rising sea levels. Buildings must also be energy-efficient and environmentally friendly.

Second, since the population is ageing, infrastructure needs to be designed with accessibility in mind. He said: "It also calls for higher standards of engineering quality, so that amenities like lifts and escalators remain reliable and accessible, even as usage intensifies."

He also encouraged the industry to be innovative.

Mr Zaqy presented 199 new professional engineers with certificates of registration. The number of professional engineers registered this year was almost double that registered in 2016.