

23 recipients of PSC scholarship proceeding with studies this year

Those who pursue studies in subsequent years will be announced during those years

Jolene Ang

When she was just 16 years old, Ms Sundaram Mohan Shakthi learnt that the Singapore Police Force (SPF) is not about “just catching and punishing criminals”.

It also focuses on rehabilitating offenders and providing social support to their family members.

This was a calling which resonated with her.

One night, her family had to call the police because of her father. He had a history of being verbally abusive, and was raising a ruckus at home.

“A lot of officers came. Besides those who were dealing with my father and giving him a warning, there were other officers dedicated solely to catering to the rest of my family and making sure we were okay,” said Ms Shakthi, now 19.

Her parents have since divorced.

“There was this one investigation officer who gave us her personal mobile number and said we could call her any time we needed help. We never did call her, but it was the gesture that made all the difference, because she went out of her way to offer help.”

Ms Shakthi is one of 23 Public Service Commission (PSC) scholarship

recipients who are proceeding with their studies this year.

She has been awarded the SPF Scholarship and will be reading psychology at Yale-NUS College in Singapore from next month.

The Public Service Division said that from now on, only PSC scholarship recipients who are pursuing their studies in the current year will be announced.

Those who have decided to proceed with their studies in subsequent years, such as male students doing their national service, will be included in the relevant years’ reports.

Ms Shakthi said: “I felt that this focus of the SPF (on rehabilitation and social support) was very unique, and is something that I want to contribute to in the future.”

She said she decided to read psychology because when she was studying at Raffles Girls’ School, she had a few friends who were experiencing mental health issues such as anxiety and depression.

“I found myself very concerned for them. I would go home and research what they were going through, to try to better understand and help them.

“That’s when I realised that providing emotional support to the people around me was something that



Ms Janika Oh playing the marimba, a percussion instrument, in a concert in April last year. Ms Oh, who loves music as well as “building things”, has been awarded the Public Service Commission Scholarship (Engineering), and will be pursuing a degree in mechanical engineering at Carnegie Mellon University in the United States. She is also planning to apply for a second major in music from her second year. PHOTO: COURTESY OF JANIKA OH



Ms Sundaram Mohan Shakthi, who has been awarded the Singapore Police Force Scholarship, will be reading psychology at Yale-NUS College in Singapore from next month. She says that providing emotional support to the people around her is something that is very important to her, and that psychology is a good avenue for her to learn how to support others in times of distress. PHOTO: COURTESY OF SUNDARAM MOHAN SHAKTHI

was very important to me,” added Ms Shakthi, who went on to study at Raffles Institution (RI).

Psychology was a good avenue

for her to learn how to support others in times of distress, she said.

“There aren’t usually many females who get (the SPF Scholar-

ship)...It’s a huge privilege and honour to be entrusted with a career in the uniformed service,” she added.

Ms Shakthi’s RI schoolmate

Janika Oh, also 19, has been awarded the PSC Scholarship (Engineering).

Introduced in 2017, the PSC Scholarship (Engineering) aims to develop individuals for leadership positions in the engineering and technology areas of the public sector.

Ms Oh developed a “love for building things” as a child.

She also has a passion for music and has learnt to play instruments such as the piano, *erhu*, *guzheng* and drums.

She will be pursuing a degree in mechanical engineering at Carnegie Mellon University in the United States, with remote learning for the first semester starting next month.

She is also planning to apply for a second major in music from her second year.

Having read physics, economics, mathematics and music at RI, Ms Oh said: “Studying the sciences gives me the logic and thinking needed to solve problems efficiently. Studying the arts gives me an understanding of emotions and a creative outlook on problems.

“So through studying both, I was able to be a more holistic person, looking at things from a different perspective and thinking out of the box. That benefited me a lot.”

Mr Chan Choon Yong, another recipient of the PSC Scholarship (Engineering), said he was interested in cyber security.

The 19-year-old from Tampines Meridian Junior College will be pursuing a double major in computer science and statistics at the National University of Singapore.

Mr Chan said he hoped to contribute new ideas and spearhead innovations in the area of cyber security.

He added: “I believe that my undergraduate degree... will provide abundant technical experience in these complex fields and many networking opportunities with local and foreign experts.”

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Public servants must apply solutions to Singapore context: Chan

Those in the public service must continually challenge their own perspectives and learn to apply solutions to various problems in the Singapore context, said Trade and Industry Minister Chan Chun Sing.

“We must look at how other people do things, see what we can learn from them – as in what to do, but also sometimes what not to do – so that we can apply the solutions in context for our country,” he said.

Diversity is “not just based on the usual race, language, religion perspective”, but it also involves looking at different ways of approaching and solving problems – and these are important aspects to consider in the public service, he added.

Mr Chan was speaking to the media after a virtual dialogue yesterday with Public Service Commission (PSC) scholarship recipients, where they discussed national challenges such as the role of the public service in a post-Covid-19 era.

There are 23 recipients who are pursuing their studies this year. Due to the pandemic, there was no physical award ceremony.

The Public Service Division said that henceforth, only PSC scholarship recipients who are pursuing their studies in the current year will be included in its announcement.

Those who have decided to proceed with their studies in subsequent years, such as male students doing their national service, will be included in the relevant year’s reports.

Mr Chan, who is also Minister-in-charge of the Public Service, said that during the dialogue, a number of scholarship recipients had voiced concerns on whether



Trade and Industry Minister and Minister-in-charge of the Public Service Chan Chun Sing at a virtual dialogue with Public Service Commission scholarship recipients yesterday. Due to the pandemic, there was no physical award ceremony. PHOTO: CHANCHUNHSING/FACEBOOK

Covid-19 would disrupt their studies and career plans.

These worries are valid and shared by many Singaporeans of their age, Mr Chan noted.

PSC chairman Lee Tzu Yang addressed these concerns in an open letter to the scholarship recipients.

Mr Lee said that while travel and immersion in foreign cultures have currently been made difficult by border closures and travel restrictions, the students can diversify their learning experiences in other ways.

He said: “Community service is

possible wherever you are. By building relationships with people different from you, across nationalities, ethnicities and socio-economic backgrounds, you can better understand how others experience and handle issues. A different lens gives a different view.”

Mr Chan said that one important message for the scholarship recipients is that, while pursuing their studies overseas or locally, they should “consciously and continuously look out for new opportunities to enrich their perspectives”.

This is so that when circumstan-

ENRICHING SINGAPORE

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TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER CHAN CHUN SING, on his hopes for the scholarship recipients.

ces change and new problems arise, they will have fresh ideas on how to apply solutions in the context of challenges Singaporeans face.

The minister added: “We are all united in one goal. And that is for Singapore to defy the odds of history to continue as an independent country that will not only survive, but thrive.”

“I hope that as (the scholarship recipients) go forth to the different universities, different areas of studies, they will also bring home new networks and knowledge to enrich Singapore.”

Jolene Ang

Veteran coach gets 21 months’ jail for molesting teen athlete

Nicole Chia

Veteran track and field coach Loh Siang Piow was yesterday sentenced to 21 months’ jail for molesting a teenage athlete twice in 2013.

The 75-year-old, better known in the sports fraternity as Loh Chan Pew, was last month found guilty of using criminal force on the female athlete when she was 18, by rubbing her genitals on two occasions while massaging the back of her thighs.

Loh appeared expressionless as the sentence was announced, and is expected to file an appeal.

District Judge Marvin Bay said: “There was a deeply egregious abuse of trust here. Young trainees are placed in the care of coaches with the legitimate expectation by

the trainees, their parents and the public at large that they will be protected from harm or exploitation.”

Both incidents were said to have happened at the old Tampines Stadium on two Sundays between January and March 17 in 2013.

The girl lodged a police report against Loh on July 30, 2016.

During the trial, which began in 2018, the court heard that Loh touched the victim’s groin over her thighs as she lay on a bench during a massage after a private training session.

At another session, Loh was said to have rubbed her genitals over her thighs during the massage and told her to “just relax” when she told him to stop.

Judge Bay said the sentence for the second charge must be signifi-

cantly heavier than that for the first charge, given that it involved a “comparatively prolonged event” and “extensive and repetitive intrusion of the victim’s vaginal area”.

The girl submitted an impact statement, which was read out to the court. She said in the statement that the experience of going to trial was “a hundred times more torturous than the experience itself”.

“I thought speaking up would be the right thing to do. I never imagined that this would turn into such a nightmare,” she added. “I hope more can be done to protect victims of sexual assault who speak up.”

Deputy Public Prosecutor Gail Wong had earlier urged the court to jail Loh for at least 24 months for both charges, citing factors including abuse of authority and trust, pre-

meditation and a “patent lack of remorse” on Loh’s part.

She also stressed the importance of the sentence reflecting the need for deterrence.

In mitigation, defence lawyer Victor Lee highlighted his client’s otherwise good character and medical conditions, among other factors, and sought a jail term of five to six months for the first charge and seven to 10 months for the second, with both to run concurrently.

Loh, previously deputy superintendent of prisons, was a former national sprinter and coach of 35 years. He also used to be a vice-president of Singapore Athletics, which governs the sport here.

Judge Bay noted Loh’s medical conditions, and expressed confidence that the prison medical services will provide a high level of care in managing these conditions.

For each charge of outrage of modesty, he could have been jailed for up to two years and/or fined. He cannot be caged as he is more than 50 years old.

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The 75-year-old Loh Siang Piow was last month found guilty of using criminal force on a female athlete when she was 18, by rubbing her genitals on two occasions in 2013 while massaging the back of her thighs. ST PHOTO: WONG KWAI CHOW