

## Yahoo

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### **Yahoo! honours inaugural 'Singapore 9' winners**

*By Jeanette Tan*

Veteran Singapore political opposition leader Chiam See Tong headlined the inaugural Yahoo! Singapore 9 awards on Friday night.

Held at Klapsons, The Boutique Hotel near Tanjong Pagar, luminaries from Singapore's arts, business, media, culture, sports and non-profit industries gathered for the inaugural celebration of the Yahoo! Singapore 9 campaign.

But it was the former Potong Pasir Member of Parliament and Singapore People's Party leader, who was accompanied by his wife and non-constituency Member of Parliament (NCMP) Lina and daughter Camilla, who attracted the most attention during the two-hour ceremony.

"I feel very honoured. Especially when you've got such prestigious people like Prime Minister Lee and Mr Wijesingha and the others (who were nominated alongside me) ... and I thank Yahoo! for giving me such a big honour," said Mr Chiam.

Hoping his win would inspire younger Singaporeans, the 76-year-old said, "I'm just an ordinary Singaporean. Unless a man is convinced that he has a mission to accomplish in Singapore, he will not come forward... I definitely think Singapore has changed, there's no doubt about that. It's just a question of time... Singapore will be more open and able to take all the different views of the world."

Mr Chiam topped the Singapore 9 online poll in the Politics category, beating out fellow nominees PM Lee Hsien Loong, former Foreign Minister George Yeo, National Solidarity Party candidate Nicole Seah and Singapore Democratic Party's Vincent Wijesingha.

Held over the past four weeks, the campaign's aim was to honour nine Singaporeans in various categories through an online poll, which garnered over 50,000 votes.

Local filmmaker Royston Tan, who topped the Culture category by winning the most votes ahead of the likes of Amanda Heng, School of the Arts principal Rebecca Chew and Dick Lee, also received celebrity treatment, with many guests eager for a quick snap with him.

Acknowledging his win, the director of local hit films like "881" and "12 Lotus" said it was awards like these that kept him going.

"To get encouragement like this keeps us going, continues to inspire us to keep going, and hopefully inspires younger people to continue what we have started. This a wonderful campaign that Yahoo! has. It's quite alternative and you feature different people who would not usually be featured on mainstream media," he said.

"Singapore isn't just about everything politically correct. We are made of people from all walks of life and they all deserve a voice, and I'm very proud to be a part of that, " he added, before admitting that shaking hands with Mr Chiam was "an awesome moment".

President and CEO of the Securities Investors Association of Singapore (SIAS) David Gerald, who topped the Business Category, also thanked those who voted for him and admitted the win was "unexpected".

He said, "I myself voted for Tharman Shanmugaratnam, he's done a lot in his capacity as Minister for Finance. Mr Heng Swee Keat too, he's done a lot as chairman of MAS (Monetary Authority of Singapore)."

"But I suppose I was given the recognition for the issues that I have championed for the downtrodden, the small people... I am pleased that the SIAS and my team who helped me achieve what we've achieved for the past 12 years has been recognised by Yahoo! and the visitors to Yahoo!," he added.

"Yahoo! should be congratulated for this move... it goes a long way to encourage people involved in pursuing their social entrepreneurship, and their agenda for the interests of mankind, be it a politician or people like me, helping the small people," he said.

Founder of Animal Concerns Research and Education Society (ACRES) Louis Ng also thanked the voters for his win in the NGO category.

He said he and his wife, Amy, who was present with him, will continue to champion animal rights, and are planning to take their cause around the region to work with other groups to save more animals from exploitation and mistreatment.

Popular blogger, Lee Kin Mun aka mrbrown, who topped the closely contested Media category ahead of the likes of Wendy Cheng (Xiaxue), former The Online Citizen editor Andrew Loh and political commentator Alex Au, was unable to attend the ceremony but he acknowledged those who voted for him.

"I am deeply humbled and honoured to be elected by the voters for the very first Yahoo! 9s," he said.

Others who attend the ceremony included former chief editor of The Online Citizen Andrew Loh, political blogger Alex Au and under-16 Cubs team captain Jeffrey Lightfoot.

Despite going home empty-handed, Loh said he was flattered to be nominated in the media category.

"The last time I was nominated for anything was in primary school -- for the class football team," he joked. "I think this (campaign) should continue, definitely, because there are a lot of people doing work quietly, but very good and necessary work, and giving them recognition will also inspire other people to step forward and do more good work for the community," he added.

Lightfoot, who recently recovered from an injury that kept him out of the recent Lion City Cup agreed, adding that he was particularly grateful to his parents who enthusiastically rallied for votes for him in the sports category.

"I feel very honoured (to be nominated) because they (other nominees including Fandi Ahmad, Theresa Goh and Tao Li) are such famous people and they've done so much for their respective sports," he said. "I was very excited to be nominated! I didn't expect to be there, and I was very happy and proud that I was. I didn't mind not winning, I was just very shocked that I was nominated."

He added that he was inspired when reading about the achievements of nominees in other categories such as in Entertainment and the Media.

"It motivates me to do much better than what I am now, and I will hopefully be as successful in football as they are (in their own fields) in the future," he said.

Marketing director of key sponsor McDonald's Singapore, Agatha Yap, said her company was proud to have been a partner of the inaugural awards.

"We too recognise the 9 iconic Singaporeans that have made a difference with their heart and soul. This project is in synergy with our 'Made better for Singapore' campaign and we too hail the man on the street, the everyday hero who strives to make Singapore better," she said.

The complete list of the inaugural Yahoo! Singapore 9 award winners:

- Politics: Chiam See Tong
- Business: David Gerald
- Arts & culture: Royston Tan
- NGOs: Louis Ng (ACRES)
- Entertainment: Taufik Batisah
- Sports: Fandi Ahmad
- Media: Lee Kin Mun (mrbrown)
- Youth: Olivia Ong
- Thinkers: Ho Kwon Ping