



Supporters outside Braddell Heights Community Club cheering the convoy of Rio 2016 Paralympians during the celebratory parade yesterday. The half-day parade, in honour of the Singapore team's best performance at the Paralympics, included the 13-strong contingent being ferried in 11 Ferraris and two London cabs from the Sengkang Sports Centre to VivoCity. ST PHOTOS: MARK CHEONG

# Hurrah for our Paralympians!

Hundreds gather to cheer the team's success during celebratory parade yesterday

Chua Siang Yee

Chauffeured in a swanky convoy of sports cars, Singapore's 2016 Paralympians were the toast of the town yesterday as they celebrated the country's best performance at the Games with a half-day parade.

The 13-strong contingent were ferried in 11 Ferraris and two London cabs from Sengkang Sports Centre to VivoCity via the National Library, in honour of their fine showing in Rio de Janeiro, where Yip Pin Xiu won two golds and Theresa Goh clinched a bronze.

Back home, the sun was at its sizzling best yesterday but so were the spirits of the approximately 1,000 fans who turned up to cheer the para-athletes at designated pit stops and cheering points.

It was the second public celebration of sporting success in quick succession. Last month, swimmer Joseph Schooling embarked on an open-top bus parade to celebrate his Olympic gold, the country's first.

Yip, who also won a Paralympic gold at the 2008 Games, said: "Many Singaporeans stood under the sun to welcome us and we feel very touched that a lot of people would do that."

"We thank everybody for their support and we're so honoured to be able to do Singapore proud."

"This is really a good opportunity to be able to showcase what para sport is and how sport can unite a nation."

Proceedings started at Sengkang Sports Centre, where more than 100 fans rose early to catch a glimpse of the Paralympians.

Among them was Joanne Choo, there with parents Ging Yang and Sally. The 11-year-old said: "I read about Pin Xiu in the newspapers. She is an inspiration for me to work harder and to excel."

"I'm writing a speech about her for a public speaking course and wanted to see her in person."

Minister of State for Health Lam Pin Min was also present. He hailed the team for their good showing and said they were an inspiration to all Singaporeans.

The entourage then left for the National Library. Along the way,

they passed through Yip's Serangoon neighbourhood, where a huge crowd had formed at Braddell Heights Community Club to wave as the Ferrari carrying Yip zoomed past.

The convoy also passed by Yip's alma mater, Bendemeer Primary School, where some pupils and teachers stood waving mini Singapore flags.

At the National Library, Central Singapore District Mayor Denise Phua welcomed the contingent, together with students from Pathlight School, volunteers from welfare organisation Peace Connect and senior citizens from Kampong Glam.

The para-athletes were given tokens of appreciation by the Singapore Management University, where Yip is a social sciences undergraduate. It is also boccia player Nurulasyiqah Taha's alma mater.

After a short break, the party headed for VivoCity, where some 400 fans waited to congratulate them. They were led by Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Grace Fu, who told them: "Thank you for making us very proud... and we look forward to even more spectacular performances on behalf of Singapore."

At each stop, emcees held question-and-answer sessions for the

A PROUD MOMENT

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MINISTER FOR CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH GRACE FU

public to get to know the athletes better. And this was how they learnt that Yip ate kway chap, nasi lemak, chwee kuay and fishball noodles – shared with her brother and sister-in-law – upon her return from Rio.

Also joining in the weekend jamboree were national athletes Shayna Ng (bowling) and Stephenie Chen (canoeing), who hosted a live session for the Team Singapore Facebook page.

The duo were also there to cheer for good friends Yip and Goh. Together, they are part of a 14-strong group of friends, many of them national athletes, who call themselves the "Sexayys".

Ng said: "It was an honour to be part of the celebratory parade. I respect what they've done for the country and everyone should feel proud that we have this group of 13 great athletes representing Singapore."

The Paralympians will get another hurrah in Parliament, the same honour Schooling received.

Yesterday, Ms Fu wrote on Facebook: "By showing, so evidently, their tenacity and resilience to fly Singapore's flag high, our Paralympians have brought out the Singapore Spirit in us."

"I have invited the entire team of Paralympians to one of the upcoming Parliament sittings, to pay tribute to them for their extraordinary achievements."

Yesterday's festivities had some noting how far para sport had come in both achieving excellence and raising its public profile.

"Five years ago, it was hard to envisage such an outpouring of support for para-athletes," said Mr Tang Siew Hong, 61, an IT manager who is the father of para-swimmer Joshua Tang, 24.

Added former Olympian C. Kunalan, 74, who was at the library to lend his support: "These athletes have done something really unique that they've been doing for years, but without much support and visibility."

"I'm glad that there is new interest in para games and I hope this interest continues to keep up."

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Additional reporting by Alvin Chia and Nicole Chia

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Supporters taking a selfie with equestrian para-athlete Laurentia Tan (centre) at the Sengkang Sports Centre during the Paralympians' first stop on the One Team Singapore celebratory parade.



Paralympic archer Nur Syahidah Alim (left) and track and field participant Muhammad Diroy Noordin (centre) arriving at VivoCity, where about 400 fans had been waiting to congratulate the sportsmen.



Swimmer Yip Pin Xiu, who won two golds, greeting the crowd gathered at VivoCity. She thanked everybody for their support and said that the team was "honoured to be able to do Singapore proud".