



Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong taking a selfie yesterday with national para-swimmer Yip Pin Xiu and her coach Mark Chay at the Athletes Achievement Awards & Appreciation Ceremony that was held at One Farrer Hotel. Yip, who won two gold medals at this year's Tokyo Paralympic Games, was among 10 para-athletes feted at the ceremony yesterday. ST PHOTO: JASON QUAH

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

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NATIONAL PARA-SWIMMER YIP PIN XIU

GRATEFUL FOR DBS' SUPPORT

Not just for the financial reward, but more importantly also because (its involvement) moves the needle on inclusivity and equality, and demonstrates intangibly that each athlete... has unique intrinsic value.



MINISTER FOR CULTURE, COMMUNITY AND YOUTH EDWIN TONG

Yip gets \$800k for golds; reward doubled as DBS joins as sponsor

Sazali Abdul Aziz

National para-swimmer Yip Pin Xiu yesterday received two cheques amounting to \$800,000 as reward for the two gold medals she won at this year's Tokyo Paralympic Games, double what she previously would have collected through the Singapore National Paralympic Council's (SNPC) Athletes Achievement Awards (AAA) scheme.

The additional financial boost is due to DBS Bank coming on board as an AAA sponsor and matching the \$200,000 for a Paralympic gold medal put up by the AAA's primary backer, the Tote Board.

DBS' initial commitment will span two Paralympic Games cycles, until the 2024 edition in Paris.

Yip, who was among the 10 Tokyo 2020 para-athletes feted yesterday at the AAA & Appreciation Ceremony at One Farrer Hotel, said the past two weeks have been like a "cherry on top of the cake" and added that she was "very grateful".

Earlier this month, she had also been named the inaugural recipient of the President's Award for Inspiring Achievement.

Her two triumphs in Tokyo, in the S2 50m and 100m backstroke events, took her tally to five since the Beijing Games in 2008.

On the increase in monetary rewards at major Games, the 29-year-old, who has Charcot-Marie-Tooth disease – a disorder that leads to a progressive weakening of the muscles – said: "It's a step in the right direction and I hope more Singapore companies can come in and support us."

"It really takes a village to build one champion, and it's very, very heartening that there are more and more people stepping up to be a part of this village."

DBS' involvement comes on the back of a spirited public debate about the disparity in cash incentives for Singapore athletes at major Games. Swimmer Joseph Schooling earned \$1 million when he won a historic gold at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro.

After returning from Tokyo last month, Yip and other members of the para-sports fraternity had called for parity in the amounts of cash incentives for medallists. This was echoed by former diplomat Tommy Koh in an opinion piece published in The Straits Times.

How much S'pore athletes get at major Games

With DBS Bank joining the Tote Board as a sponsor of the Athletes Achievement Awards (AAA), the cash incentives for athletes at major para-events will increase though they will still be less than what their able-bodied counterparts will get for gold medals.

Both groups also have to give 20 per cent of this monetary reward to their respective associations to help fund future training and development.

- **Olympics:** \$1,000,000 (no additional payout for subsequent gold medals)

- **Paralympics:** \$400,000*
- **Asian Games:** \$200,000 for first gold, \$100,000 for second, none for third.
- **Asian Para Games:** \$70,000*
- **Commonwealth Games:** \$40,000 for an able-bodied athlete (up to two golds) and \$40,000 for a para-athlete*
- **SEA Games:** \$10,000 for first gold, \$5,000 each for a second and third gold.
- **Asean Para Games:** \$4,000*

*Under the AAA framework, para-athletes are entitled to rewards for a maximum of three golds at all major Games.

The topic also evoked a strong response from Singaporeans who shared their views on the ST Forum page and on social media, with some opposing the call for equal cash rewards on the basis of the narrower field of competition.

Some MPs had also inquired

about this gap. On Oct 5, Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong said in Parliament that the SNPC was in talks with potential sponsors on raising the cash rewards within the AAA framework.

SNPC president Teo-Koh Sock Miang said DBS coming on board was

"wonderful news" for para sport here and said her association is in talks with more potential donors as they strive for their main target of parity. "Until we get there, we still have a lot of work to do," she said.

Dr Teo-Koh also said the SNPC "will have conversations" with the Singapore National Olympic Council – which administers the Major Games Award Programme for able-bodied athletes – before the 2024 Paris Games about possibly aligning the way they honour and celebrate all national athletes, "because this is not a bidding war".

DBS Singapore group executive and country head Shee Tse Koon said the bank "readily agreed" to come on board as a sponsor of the programme when approached by the SNPC. "All of us can do our part to create a more inclusive Singapore," he said.

Mr Tong said he was grateful for DBS' support. "Not just for the financial reward, but more importantly also because (its involvement) moves the needle on inclusivity and equality, and demonstrates intangibly that each athlete... has unique intrinsic value."

msazali@sph.com.sg