

President Halimah Yacob giving the trophy for the President's Award for Inspiring Achievement to Paralympic swimmer Yip Pin Xiu at the Istana yesterday. With them is Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong. PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO



Paralympian hopes award will inspire others to action

Yip Pin Xiu honoured for impact she has made on sport, society

Laura Chia

She is a five-time Paralympic swimming champion, but Ms Yip Pin Xiu's achievements have sent ripples well beyond the pool.

For her contributions to Singapore, the 30-year-old was presented the inaugural President's Award for Inspiring Achievement yesterday.

At the ceremony at the Istana, President Halimah Yacob de-

scribed the award as one that honours and celebrates Singaporeans who have demonstrated courage and persistence to overcome personal adversity, who excelled in their respective fields, and whose contributions have made a significant impact on society.

She pointed to Ms Yip's five Paralympic golds but also highlighted her service, which includes roles as a Nominated MP from 2018 to 2020, vice-chairman of the Purple Parade Working Committee, and member of the National Youth Council and Sport Singapore's Safe Sport task force.

Madam Halimah, who said it was "only fitting" that Ms Yip was the inaugural recipient of the award,

added: "During her tenure (as an NMP), Pin Xiu used her voice in Parliament to champion greater inclusivity in sports and raise awareness around the issue of sexual violence and harassment.

"Her passionate calls for action have not only sparked much-needed conversation about these matters, but also challenged society to play their part towards a common good.

"Pin Xiu's involvement in these causes is a testament to her heart for service and her conviction to use her influence as a force for good. She reminds us of our collective contributions as we build our nation and a better future for all."

Ms Yip, who has Charcot-Marie-

Tooth disease, a progressive nerve condition, thanked Madam Halimah and Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong, who was also in attendance, for their support and recognition.

Mr Tong had announced in Parliament in October that Ms Yip, who had won her fourth and fifth Paralympic golds in Tokyo weeks earlier, would be conferred the new award.

Her success was celebrated, but it also ignited a public debate on the disparity in cash rewards for Olympic and Paralympic medalists, with the latter previously receiving a fifth of what an Olympian would earn.

The new award, Mr Tong said, was the result of discussions between him and his Cabinet colleagues on how to appropriately recognise her achievements.

Responding to queries, the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth said that it will make public calls for nominations once every three years for future awards and work with government agencies to identify and nominate exceptional and deserving individuals.

Shortlisted individuals will be put through a recommendation panel followed by a selection panel to decide the eventual awardee.

Ms Yip, whose trophy depicts a figure crossing a finish line and was designed and handcrafted by visually impaired local sculptor Victor Tan, said: "I hope this award shows that it is not just about making big achievements in life, but also about being consistent in doing the smaller, easier tasks to get to where you want to be eventually."

Joining her at the Istana were her parents – Mr Yip Chee Khiong and Ms Margaret Chong – and coach Mark Chay, who said: "This will blaze a trail and inspire future generations of athletes, para-athletes and persons with disabilities to think about what they can contribute."

Ms Yip hopes to encourage people to do what they are passionate about while trying to make a positive change, saying: "At the start, I didn't know how big of a change I could make.

"Now that I know the impact my journey can make, I would like to continue that and I don't want it to just be limited to people with disabilities or sports, but every Singaporean out there."

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