

Publication: Mothership Online

Date: 16 October 2024

Headline: MPs thank S'pore Olympians & Paralympians in parliament

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Members of Parliament (MPs) congratulated and thanked the Team Singapore athletes who participated in the 2024 Olympics and Paralympics for over three hours in parliament on Oct. 16.

17 Team Singapore athletes were also present.



Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong tabled a parliamentary motion to honour the efforts and achievements athletes of the 33 athletes who represented Singapore at the 2024 Olympics and Paralympics:

“So, 33 of our Singapore's best athletes competed at the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games. They competed against the world's best. Carrying the weight of our

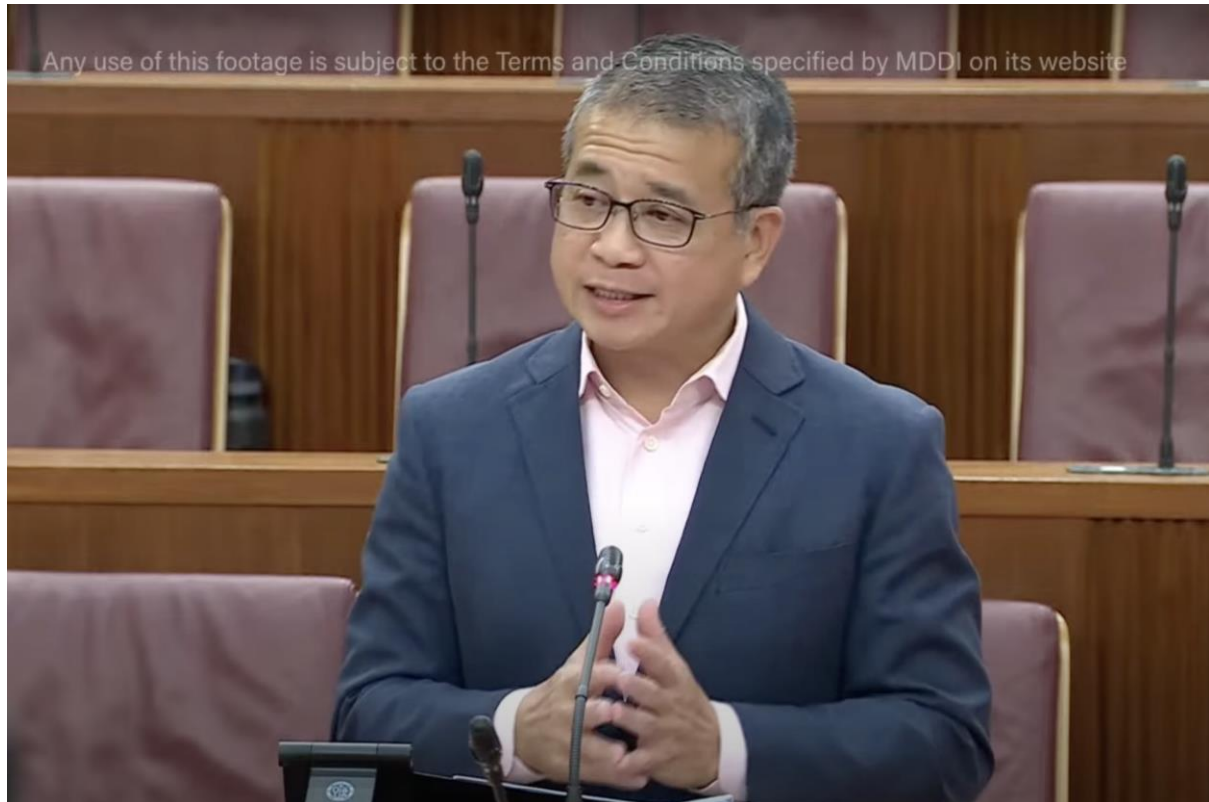
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nation's hopes and dreams, they stood out, not just as individuals, but also represented Singapore's collective aspirations.”

Thank you for showing that S'poreans can chase rainbows no matter the odds: Edwin Tong



Tong highlighted the stories and achievements of individual athletes.

Among them, he talked about Tan's historic first medal in Boccia at the 2024 Paralympics. Tan won the silver medal at the Boccia finals on Sep. 2, 2024.

“I would add that she was a whisker away from the gold. It went down to the very last ball. But I'm sure this will only inspire and motivate Jeralyn even more in future editions of the Paralympics,” he said.

Tong also spoke about Maeder's medal victory at the 2024 Olympics, which he described as a “wonderful birthday present at our National Day this year”.

“Max's story shows us that we can, and indeed, every Singaporean must dare to dream big and chase the rainbow, no matter the odds.”

He also highlighted Yip's sporting achievements, having won her seventh gold medal in 16 years after her first gold, but also how she uses her sporting achievements to champion causes she believes in:

“Pin Xiu has made extensive contributions to our nation as a passionate advocate on social issues for youths, sports, and inclusion for persons with disabilities. In fact, just over the weekend, she was part of the Purple Parade.”

Tong added:

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“Mr. Speaker, I’m sure many in this house, as well as fellow Singaporeans, would have watched our athletes compete on TV, but we only saw the tip of the iceberg, or the sharp end of the spear, as it were. An event like athletics or swimming can be over in 10 seconds, but we saw Team Singapore give their all in every event they competed in, left nothing behind in the cauldron of competition in Paris.”

It takes more than a village to raise an athlete

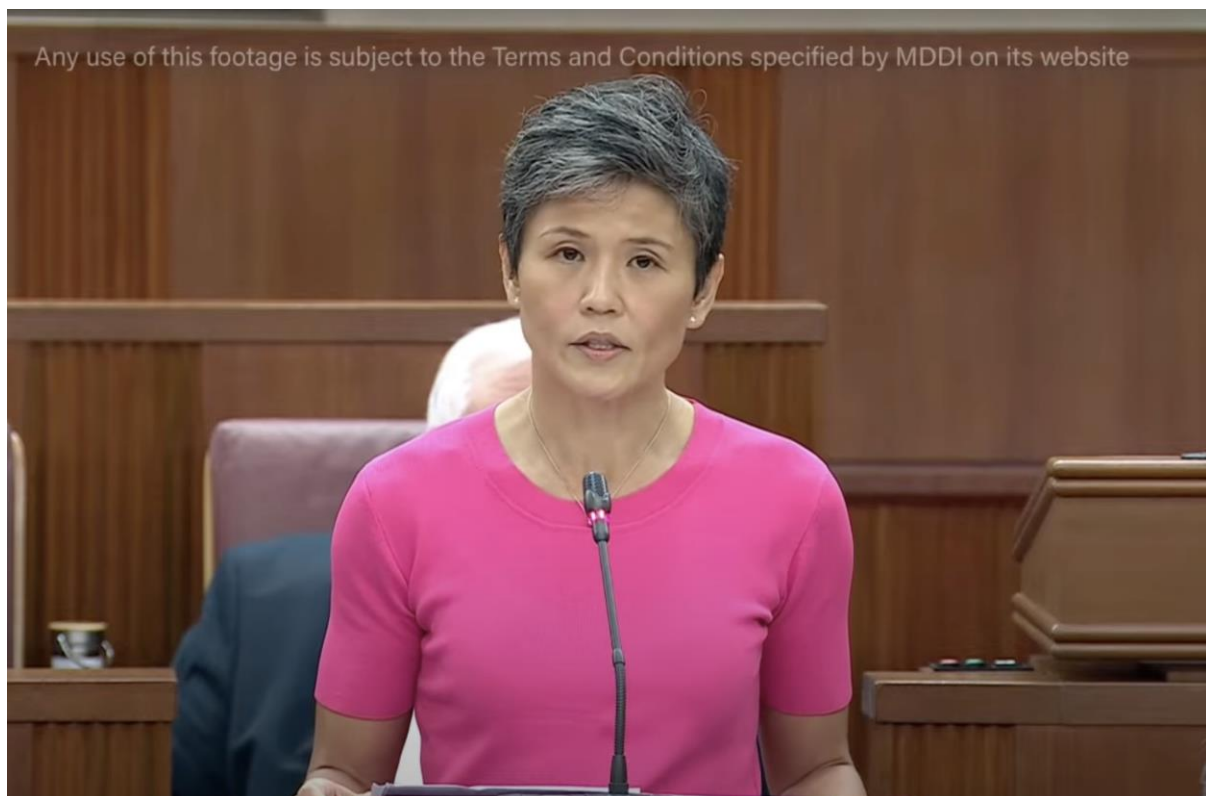
Tong also drew attention to the support systems and communities that underlay the successes of the Team Singapore athletes.

“I think it takes more than a village — maybe a whole town — to raise an athlete competing at the highest levels,” Tong said.

Tong spoke about Tan’s coach, Yurnita Omar, who he described as Tan’s “closest confidant”:

“Yurnita celebrated every success and cried every tear, alongside Jeralyn. This deep connection and trust allowed them to navigate both triumphs and challenges together. We are fortunate to have coaches like Yurnita as part of Team Singapore.”

Thank you athletes: Poh Li San



Sembawang GRC MP Poh Li San joined Tong to offer her “heartiest appreciation and congratulations” to the Olympians and Paralympians.

“Competition at the highest level is relentless, and the window of opportunity is extremely short,” she noted.



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She made some suggestions, including a modified National Service (NS) programme for athletes who have already competed at the Olympics and have the potential to excel at the next Olympics.

This could include Basic Military Training, followed by a short specialist course that could be more intensive for a shorter period, she said.

The athlete will then complete the remaining NS term at SportSG to focus on full-time training and competition, in preparation for the next Olympic Games, she added.

Thank you both medalists and non-medalists: Jamus Lim



Sengkang GRC MP Jamus Lim also expressed appreciation and admiration for all national athletes, regardless of whether they may or may not have medaled in the most recent games.

He shared some thoughts about how athletes are rewarded.

He called for “equal compensation” and to recognise all sportsmen's and sportswomen's accomplishments equally with the rewards that “they so definitively deserve.

Thank you for your sacrifices: Yip Hon Weng

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Yio Chu Kang SMC MP Yip Hon Weng said success often comes with sacrifices.

Many of our athletes had to set aside tertiary education, stable careers, and even long-term financial security in the pursuit of excellence, he noted.

“These sacrifices are not always visible behind the shine of medals, but they are real, and they deserve our recognition and support,” he said.

The mental well-being of the athletes also deserves our attention, Yip said.

“Do we currently offer a dedicated space where athletes in their post-sport careers can connect, share experiences, and contribute their insights to shape future sporting policies?” He asked.

He reasoned that creating such a community could be invaluable, both in safeguarding their mental health and in harnessing their expertise for the betterment of sports in Singapore.

Thank you for flying our flag high: Hazel Poa

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Non-Constituency Member of Parliament (NCMP) Hazel Poa congratulated the Team Singapore athletes for their achievements in the Olympics and Paralympics.

She also highlighted the achievements of the three medallists, Yip Pin Xiu, Jeralyn Tan and Max Maeder.

“As we celebrate the achievements of our Olympians and Paralympians, I hope the House will also join me in recognising the tireless efforts of the coaches, support staff, and families who have contributed to their success. Their sacrifices have helped shape our champions,” she said.

Thank you for your efforts: See Jinli Jean

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Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) See Jinli Jean expressed her appreciation for the hard-earned medals of the athletes present and the efforts they had put in to clinch them.

Speaking on the need for financial backing for sportspersons, See remarked that the decision to invest in athlete development and sporting excellence should not be solely dictated by what is tangible.

She reminded me that every athlete takes time to develop and peaks at different paces.

See then listed a couple of suggestions to give budding athletes a leg-up, such as having more corporates could step up to provide financial support and increase sports accessibility to those in need.

Thank you for all you have done for us: Usha Chandradas

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“Our athletes give us so much more than just medals. They show us what it's like to perform under pressure and to work hard at a goal,” said NMP Usha Chandradas.

She called for parity in the awards for our Olympians and Paralympians.

Chandradas said that post-podium rewards should be paired with holistic efforts to support our athletes in their journey to the podium.

However, she highlighted that financial awards have an important role to play in signalling accomplishment and prestige.

“Awarding our athletes and para-athletes with the same top prizes will send a powerful message of inclusion — one that tells our society and the world that we value both sets of athletes equally,” she said.

Thank you for showing us that dreams can come true: Ong Hua Han



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"Thank you, Pin Xiu and Jeralyn, for showing us, showing me, that dreams can come true if you have the courage and the will to pursue them," said NMP Ong Hua Han.

While he applauded the medal winners, he reminded the house not to forget all the Team Singapore athletes who competed at the highest level.

He said their sacrifices, grit, and unwavering dedication were not unnoticed.

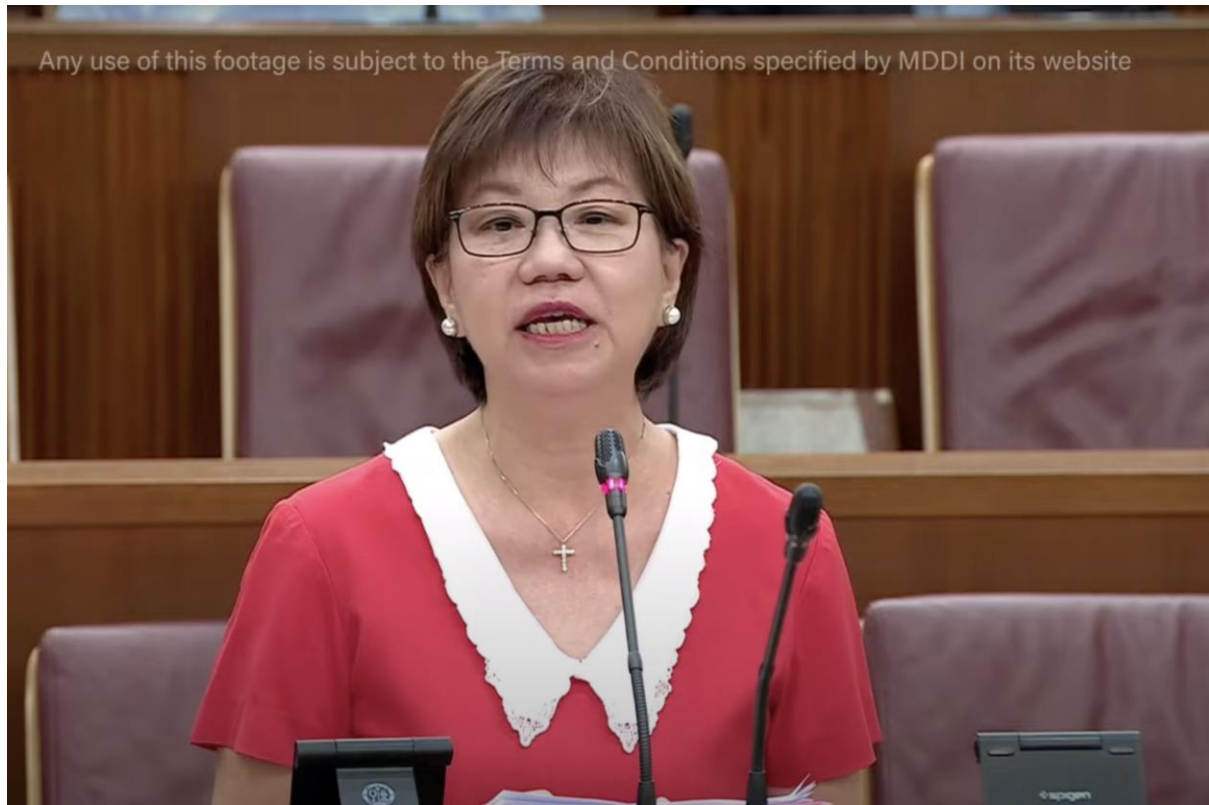
"You've given your all, and your pursuit of excellence is something we all deeply admire and respect."

Thank you everyone who supported them: Denise Phua

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Jalan Besar GRC MP Denise Phua congratulated and thanked the athletes but also highlighted the importance of the support they received, including from their families, coaches, and various sporting associations.

She also lauded the country's progress in developing sports talent, but acknowledged that there are areas we can do more in, such as providing better mentorship and post-career support for athletes, as well as further integrating sports into special schools.

Thank you for your achievements: Keith Chua

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NMP Keith Chua congratulated the Team Singapore athletes for their achievements at the Olympics and Paralympics.

“Your collective performance encourages all of us to pursue excellence in sports as a national agenda,” Chua said.

Chua called for deepened efforts to encourage and support the pursuit of sports at the earliest possible ages.

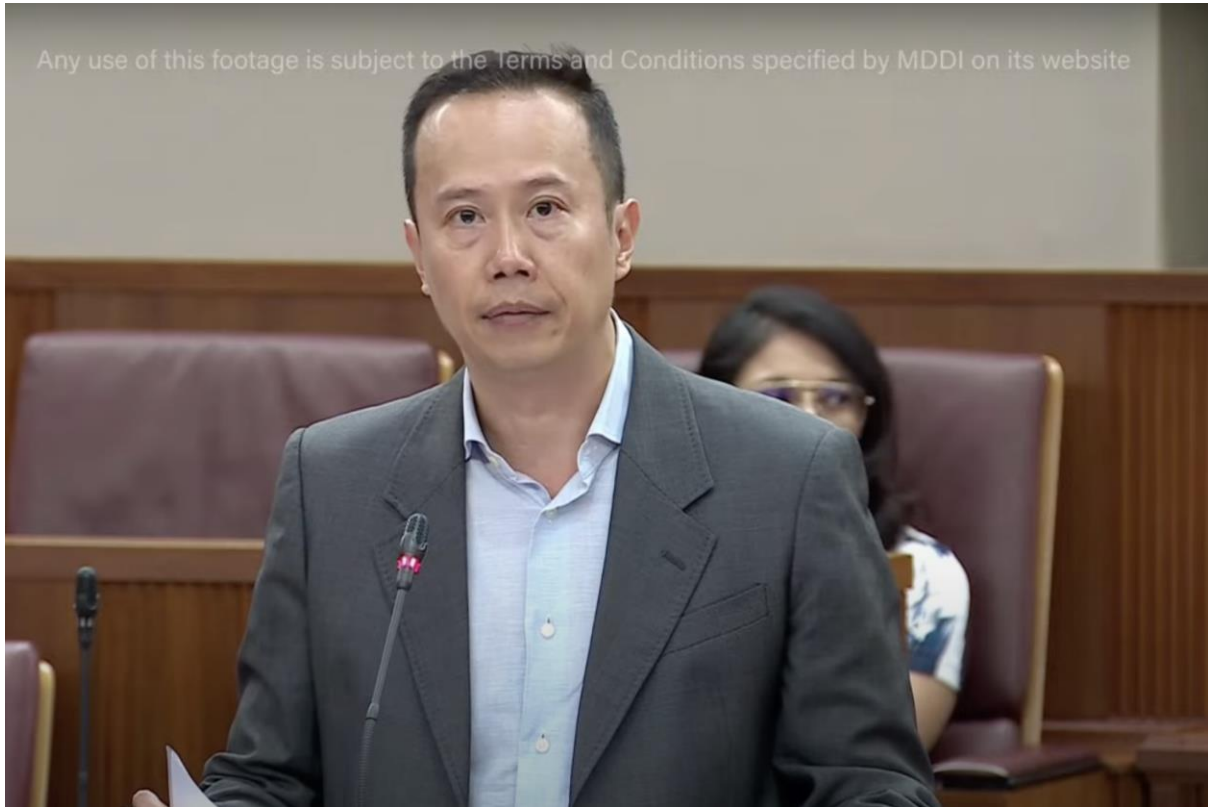
“Our current curriculum may need to be expanded to facilitate, encourage and broaden interest and participation in sports,” Chua added.

Thank you for inspiring the youth: Mark Lee

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NMP Mark Lee said that the spirit of Team Singapore went beyond producing elite athletes.

He said that it was about fostering a sporting culture that "touches every corner of society", and inspiring young Singaporeans from every background to "dream big and aim high".

"Their victories belong not just to them but to all Singaporeans."

Thank you to those behind the scenes: Razwana Begum Abdul Rahim



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NMP Razwana Begum Abdul Rahim expressed her congratulations to the athletes and welcomed them to the parliament house.

Calling to mind the athlete's gruelling years of training, she saluted their physical, mental, and emotional strength throughout their journeys.

"All of you have demonstrated remarkable physical, mental and emotional strength and determination throughout your journeys to Olympic and Paralympic success," she said.

"Mr. Speaker, the significance of the Olympic games extends far beyond medals. Singapore's participation in the games is a testament to our ongoing commitment to athletic talent, promoting a healthy lifestyle, and showcasing our nation's progress," she added.

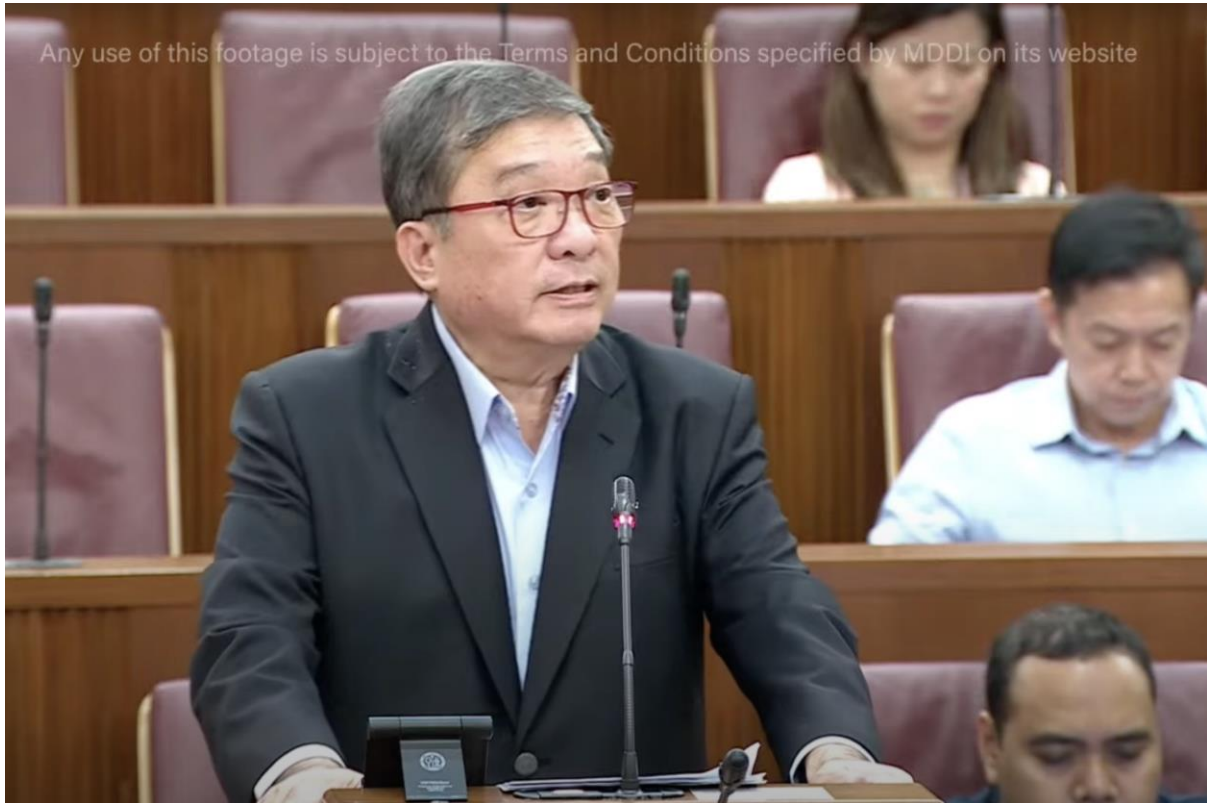
She also hailed the athletes as national heroes who inspire new generations to embrace sports and strive for greatness.

Thank you for overcoming hardships and struggles: Sitoh Yih Pin

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Potong Pasir SMC MP Sitoh Yih Pin rose in support of the motion.

He said sports is about forging our spirits in the crucible of competition as well as defeat.

He quoted bodybuilder and actor Arnold Schwarzenegger:

“Strength does not come from winning. Your struggles develop your strengths. When you go through hardships and decide not to surrender, that is strength.”

Sitoh said that while we celebrate the successes and victories of the Olympians and Paralympians, we are also here to praise them for overcoming hardships and struggles and not surrendering.

Edwin Tong addresses concerns about incentives & disability sports

In addition to congratulating the athletes, some MPs raised concerns about the disability sports landscape, as well as the incentives provided to athletes.

Tong agreed with Ong's suggestion to adopt a more structured approach to encouraging children with disabilities in mainstream schools to do sports.

Lim had also called for more parity of incentives for Paralympians and Olympians.

Tong said:

"We have been pushing the amounts up over the years, and I can understand and I appreciate entirely why members have said, let's find parity. Because there is, in fact, no difference between the way in which our para athletes train, put effort, make sacrifices, as well

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as our Olympic athletes. But let's not also lose sight of the amounts in absolute terms and how much we support our athletes."

Power of sports to inspire

Tong also remarked on the power of sports to inspire, citing an anecdote about the effect that Maeder's victory had on a young boy in Marine Parade:

"Most of you know that I look after the constituency at Marine Parade one day when I was there a couple of months ago, after the Olympics, I saw a young boy. He tied a string to a plastic bag, and he was running up and down the beach with the plastic bag. And I asked him, what was he doing? He said, I'm kite foiling.

So this has that power to engender, to inspire and to break new ground. And I think that is the power of sports."

Tong also took the opportunity to express his gratitude to the athletes, supporters and the many other stakeholders involved, including family, friends, officials, coaches and more:

"We thank all of you very much for being here, for being part of this journey, and we look forward to working with you even more, even further as we take Singapore for sports further forward."

Top images via MDDI