

# Tan Cheng Bock ‘changing gear’ as PSP chairman, not stepping aside as leader

CHANGE OF ROLE

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**DR TAN CHENG BOCK**, on relinquishing his post as secretary-general of the Progress Singapore Party. As party chairman, he will focus on engaging segments of society such as businesses and clan associations.

**Linette Lai**  
Political Correspondent

In relinquishing his post as secretary-general of the Progress Singapore Party (PSP), Dr Tan Cheng Bock, 80, said he was not stepping aside but “changing gear”.

As chairman, he will focus on engaging different segments of society such as businesses and clan associations.

He will also work towards mobilising and strengthening the party’s grassroots presence, and will help it scout for new talent, the opposition party founder and former

People’s Action Party MP said yesterday.

He remains PSP leader and will mentor his successor, former Republic of Singapore Air Force lieutenant-colonel Francis Yuen, 71.

“There was a time when my direct input was crucial, because the party was in its infancy, learning to walk,” Dr Tan said at a press conference after the election of the party’s new 14-member central executive committee (CEC).

“Now the party has grown and matured, and the new team must have the opportunity to use their strengths and skills to move forward.”

Added Dr Tan, who chaired the

press conference: “I will not lead the party from the front any more... The time is ripe for me to play a different role.”

Mr Yuen, who was formerly assistant secretary-general, aims to consolidate the party’s achievements over the past two years.

He told reporters that the goal is to make the PSP “a party of choice” for Singaporeans.

“We don’t want, in future elections, to be elected because we are by default the party to vote for, because (voters) are angry with a particular party,” said Mr Yuen, who contested Chua Chu Kang GRC during last year’s general election.

Instead, he said, voters should

support the PSP because they see it as representative of their interests and willing to fight for them.

The PSP plans to focus its future efforts on three areas: walking the ground, building up a strong team in its headquarters, and articulating the party’s stance in Parliament.

The changes to its CEC line-up come amid reports of a rift in the party, with online news site RedWire Times claiming last month that some party cadres had demanded that Dr Tan step down as secretary-general to make room for “more talented rising stars”.

But the party’s founder replied that he was not concerned by the talk. Some party members had their own personal agendas, he said. “If you’re not a team player, I don’t take you.”

He added that other party members who had contested the CEC elections “lost badly... they were rejected totally”.

Mr Yuen stressed that Dr Tan

was not coerced into stepping down as secretary-general, adding that it had been part of his predecessor’s plan all along.

“We’re done with all the teething problems we had over the recent months, all the rumours and all the unhealthy bickering. Every organisation would have that – it’s nothing new,” Mr Yuen said.

“It’s how the organisation manages it, and how we can move on with confidence, with compassion and with credibility.”

Dr Tan was also asked if he would have preferred staying on as party chief for a few more years.

“Of course, I am still the party chief. But I want to, as I said, reposition,” he replied.

“And that is very important because, we must be clear, the party is not my party alone. The party is for Singaporeans who believe that this country can be made better if we make certain changes.”

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More than 200 healthcare workers at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) took part in an escape room game, set up in the hospital, as part of their training to learn more about palliative rehabilitation care. Senior occupational therapist Nurul Ain Rahmat (standing) and a committee from TTSH organised the activity to make imparting new skills and knowledge fun and engaging. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN



## TTSH staff play ‘escape room’ game to boost palliative care skills

Knowledge in this field growing in importance as local population ages

**Timothy Goh**

Putting on a costume and solving puzzles in a mediaeval-themed room sounds like a fun weekend activity for a family or group of

friends. But for more than 200 healthcare workers at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH), it was part of their training from March 22 to 31.

The aim was to learn more about palliative rehabilitation care by going through an escape room set up in the hospital.

Among those who participated in this inventive training exercise were some 100 occupational therapists, for whom palliative care knowledge has become increasingly important, said senior occupational therapist Nurul Ain Rahmat.

The 32-year-old told The Sunday Times yesterday that occupational therapists typically try to help patients of all ages regain their daily functions after an illness or accident.

However, palliative rehabilitation care focuses on patients with

life-limiting diseases – such as end-stage lung disease – whose conditions will generally end up declining.

The role of the occupational therapist is to help patients slow or manage their decline.

“Our population is ageing at the moment, so we will soon see more patients who need palliative rehabilitation care.

“We will need occupational therapists to have knowledge of this sort of care, and how they can assist patients and their families,” said Ms Ain.

She and a committee from TTSH worked with an escape room vendor to make imparting new skills and knowledge to occupational therapists fun and engaging.

Participants in the 75-minute session went through five stations designed to test their knowledge on how to care for patients, such as by identifying the level of care the patient needs, commonly displayed symptoms and intervention techniques.

Clues were hidden throughout the room and multiple puzzles had to be solved.

Participants also had to complete a pre- and post-game quiz to test their knowledge, take a survey and share key learning points.

Ms Ain said preliminary feedback from the healthcare professionals who participated has been positive, with some saying the session helped them to be more engaged in learning, and others commenting that it helped improve their communication and teamwork skills.

“As healthcare professionals, we often need to work in teams, so it’s important to improve such skills,” she said.

One participant, occupational therapist Jasmine Ang, 24, said: “Compared to regular training such as online learning and lectures, this escape room experience enhances the learning process as it is more engaging and interactive.”

“I thoroughly enjoyed the experience,” she added.

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## Tamil Language Festival kicks off with extended line-up

**Vengadeshwaran Subramaniam**

The annual Tamil Language Festival (TLF) that will run for a month until May 2 will showcase an extended programme line-up, even as it will be held virtually for the

second year in a row.

Spearheaded by the Tamil Language Council (TLC), this year’s festival will feature 44 programmes ranging from podcasts to journal-

ism workshops, nearly double the 25 programmes in last year’s run.

Communications and Information Minister S. Iswaran, who launched the festival yesterday,

said the TLF has encouraged Tamil usage in Singapore and young people’s passion for the language, and support by community leaders, teachers, parents and students has improved the quality of the festival to the level it has achieved today.

“This festival has helped Tamil usage in our country grow as well as play an important role in growing the passion for the language among our students, our youth.

“This is because every year, new events, innovative events, events that utilise information technology – all of these offer good opportunities to grow the usage of the Tamil language,” said Mr Iswaran, who is also Minister-in-charge of Trade Relations.

TLF, which is into its 15th year, has seen an increase in participation from students ranging from pre-school to university level over the years, and it is a welcome sign that they are creating unique programmes for the festival, said Mr Iswaran.

“To ensure that the Tamil language proudly remains a living language, everyone has to work hard together,” he added during the launch telecast, which featured performances by TLF programme partners and Vasantham artists.

TLF 2021 will welcome six new partners, making it a total of 42 partners supporting the festival throughout the month. The virtual festival is open to people of all ages.

A variety of literary, oratorical,

arts and cultural programmes will be made available through virtual platforms such as Zoom, Facebook, Instagram and YouTube.

Tamil Aruvi, organised by journalist Elakeyaa Selvaraji, is the TLF’s first Tamil podcast-based programme. The five-episode podcast series will feature segments by language experts and an oratorical competition for secondary school students.

Anderson Serangoon Junior College, a new partner to the festival, will present a programme to showcase Tamil literary works and values through cinematic songs.

A journalism workshop and competition for secondary and tertiary students organised by Goldfish Publications hopes to spark interest in journalism in Tamil among students.

TLC chairman S. Manogaran said this year’s festival aims to celebrate the future of the Tamil language in Singapore.

“Having the festival officially launched by children and youth represents our vision for the younger generation and our hopes for them to be empowered to take the lead in promoting the use of our mother tongue,” he said.

“We are also marking the 20th anniversary of the Tamil Language Council by introducing a Tamil Youth Festival this September.”

More information on the festival is available on TLC’s Facebook page [www.facebook.com/TamilLanguageCouncilSingapore](http://www.facebook.com/TamilLanguageCouncilSingapore), Instagram page [@TamilLangFestival](https://www.instagram.com/TamilLangFestival) or its website [www.tamil.org.sg](http://www.tamil.org.sg)

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