

THE STRAITS TIMES

Women PAP candidates for next GE identified, will be introduced in due course: Josephine Teo



Manpower Minister and chairman of the PAP's Women's Wing Josephine Teo with other members of the wing, activists and representatives of town council cleaners during an International Women's Day celebration on March 7, 2020. ST PHOTO: NG SOR LUAN



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SINGAPORE - Women candidates have been identified by the People's Action Party (PAP) for the next general election, due by April next year, Manpower Minister Josephine Teo disclosed on Saturday (March 7).

Speaking at the PAP's Women's Wing International Women's Day celebration, Mrs Teo, who is chairman of the wing, said: "We have identified women candidates who have the passion to serve fellow Singaporeans, and have proven themselves in their chosen fields.

"They are gaining ground experience and making their mark. In due course, we will introduce them and support them to serve their residents well, like all the women MPs today," she added.

Mrs Teo told the audience, comprising activists and town council cleaners' representatives, at the YWCA Fort Canning Lodge that the diverse backgrounds of the candidates would help the party establish more partnerships with other organisations to champion issues of concern to Singaporeans.

In her speech, she noted that there are now more women MPs than when she first entered Parliament in 2006, especially with opposition and nominated MPs included.

"Apart from making sure that women have equal opportunities in Singapore, the PAP has been committed to bringing more women into politics, so that we too can make a contribution in taking our nation forward," she said.

Mrs Teo cited Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat's speech at last year's Women's Wing conference, where he called for the continued breaking down of barriers for women to take on leadership roles in society.

As the Women's Wing chairman, Mrs Teo said she hoped the pool of women PAP MPs would "grow in diversity", adding that she was confident their presence in Parliament would continue to be felt.

Describing every general election as a battle for Singapore's future, the minister said voters would decide who could help take the nation forward.

Mrs Teo said the PAP must be ready and stay humble, "whenever GE may be held".

On Saturday, she also announced that the Women's Wing was working with the PAP Community Foundation to put together special International Women's Day 2020 Care Packs for around 5,000 HDB town cleaners.

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Each pack, which will be distributed by the end of this month, consists of a thermometer, a pocket-sized bottle of hand sanitiser, insect repellent, medicated plasters, a \$30 shopping voucher, and a thank-you card made by children from PCF Sparkletots.

"It's a small gesture, but it comes from the bottom of our hearts, to thank our town cleaners for their extra work as part of the national movement to raise public hygiene standards," said Mrs Teo.

During her speech, Mrs Teo pointed to the achievements of women in leadership positions here, noting that there are six women permanent secretaries today. The first one was appointed in 1999.

"In our private sector, women now make up one-third of senior management positions in Singapore," she said.

She also suggested that employers adopt flexible work arrangements as Singapore's population ages and the world of work evolves, adding that the Covid-19 coronavirus situation showed that it was doable.

She also said women should nudge one another to "keep fit, upskill and reskill".

"Whether we are already in the workforce or have taken time out to care for our families, we should take advantage of the Mid-career Support Package and SEP (Self-Employed Persons) Training Support Scheme to prepare ourselves for a longer career runway," said Mrs Teo.

She also called on women to nudge their loved ones and community organisations to take advantage of the Matched Retirement Savings Scheme.

The scheme, which will be introduced from 2021 to 2025, involves the Government matching every dollar of cash top-up made to a person's Central Provident Fund Retirement Account, up to an annual cap of \$600.

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