

What is it like being an NDP usher?



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The things you never knew about being an NDP Usher at this year's Sports Hub

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SINGAPORE — We often rave about the National Day Parade's dazzling line-up of song and dance performances, the stunning spectacle of the marching contingents and the breathtaking fireworks display.

This year, in particular, boasts a flying unicorn, indoor fireworks, a synchronised array of lights, lasers and flame projectors, and performers suspended in the air.

But a group of people who work tirelessly behind the scenes is equally important — the ushers.

Need to know how to get from Zone 1 to 3? No problem. Need to find the restroom, stat? Sure thing. The ushers will help you, and do it with a smile too.

Engineer Joyce Hoe Huang Jiao, 23, is one of them. She has volunteered to be an usher for the past three years as part of youth charity Heartware Network, and has ushered for various types of shows such as the combined

rehearsals, National Education shows, previews and the actual-day parade.

Despite finding it "challenging" as the venue is different each time, Hoe says she "enjoys it as I get to learn new things".

"I feel extremely honoured by this opportunity (to volunteer). It allows me to have an enjoyable experience and at the same time — enrich myself," she said.

Besides her ushering duties, Hoe also helps to "plan the deployment of ushers on the ground".

This year, she will be in charge of the VIP sector for NDP on Tuesday. She will also usher at different spots, such as the gallery, carparks and lounge.

Asked what she feels about the venue, Hoe says the Sports Hub's sheltered design "provides a more comfortable environment for everyone in the stadium", and audiences can get to another area more easily as "all areas are connected throughout the whole stadium".

Want to know what it's like to be an usher? Hoe shares three things they have to do:

THERE'S A LOT OF WALKING

Ushers will need to explore the ground, especially for new locations such as the Sports Hub. These "walk-the-ground" sessions are where volunteers take a tour around the place to help "familiarise ourselves with the area", said Hoe. This is useful, as they would need to be well-equipped in answering any questions from the public, and if need be, direct them to where they want to go.

UNFURLING OF FLAGS

For the first time during the national anthem, the ushers will unfurl massive Singapore flags and roll them above the audience members' heads. "Our ushers will be carrying the flag above the spectators' heads and going up the gallery," she explained. As the flag is moving past the spectators' heads, they also help out by pushing the flag along as it passes them. A massive feat that requires team effort.

A GRAND FAREWELL

There is nothing like a red-carpet treatment to end the biggest celebrations to usher in the nation's new year. The ushers usually bid spectators goodbye with loud cheers and applause as they pass them by on their way out. Even after ushering for several occasions, Hoe still finds joy in the task. "As I work together with my volunteers, we have a common goal — we want to make the spectators have an unforgettable experience at the parade."

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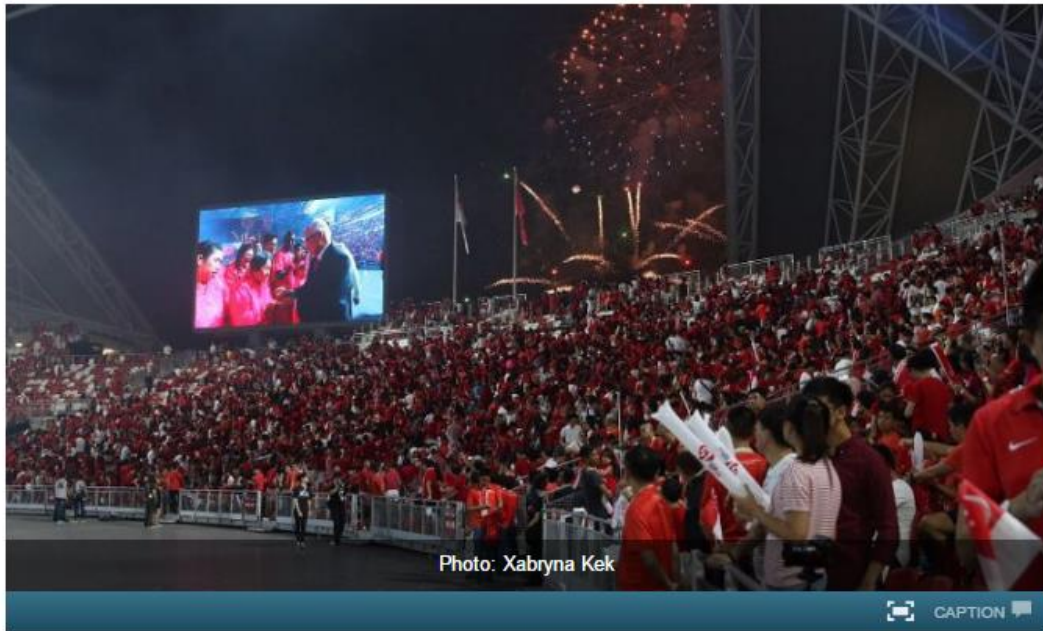
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SINGAPORE: President Tony Tan Keng Yam hosted a thank-you reception at the Istana on Monday (Aug 22) for the organisers and participants of this year's National Day Parade (NDP).

"This parade followed the SG50 Golden Jubilee celebrations. Coupled with the long-awaited return to the National Stadium, public expectations were high. I am glad to say that NDP 2016 did not only meet, but in fact surpassed, the expectations of many," he said.

"The stunning performance of our aerialists, the use of impressive aerial props and presentation of indoor fireworks came together to portray a bold and forward-looking vision of Singapore in the years to come. With the inclusion of special needs participants and the collective song signing, we were also reminded of the continuous need to progress as a cohesive and inclusive society," Dr Tan added.

The parade involved more than 10,000 participants, including representatives from the army, police and civil defence force, as well as TOUCH Community Services, the SOKA Association and the Heartware Network.

The President thanked the participants and organisers for their "many hours of dedication, strong support and enthusiastic participation which delivered a fitting celebration for Singaporeans".

- CNA/am