

MEDIA RELEASE

Singapore Confers Honorary Citizen Award on Professor Sir Richard Friend

Award recognises his invaluable and sustained contributions to Singapore's research, innovation and enterprise ecosystem

Singapore, 13 August 2026 – Singapore has conferred on **Professor Sir Richard Henry Friend**, Director of Research at the Department of Physics, University of Cambridge, the **Honorary Citizen Award** in recognition of his exceptional role in shaping Singapore's research, innovation and enterprise landscape over more than two decades. Tharman Shanmugaratnam, President of the Republic of Singapore, presented the Award to Professor Friend at a ceremony held at the Istana on 13 August 2026.

2 The Honorary Citizen Award is the highest form of recognition bestowed by the Singapore Government for outstanding contributions by a non-Singaporean to the country's growth and development. Previous recipients include individuals who had made transformative contributions in the areas of business, science and technology, information communications, education, health, arts and culture, sports, tourism, community services and security.

3 Professor Friend was a Member of the National Research Foundation's (NRF) Scientific Advisory Board (SAB) from 2009 to 2024, serving as its Chairman from 2011 to 2024. He was also a Member of the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council (RIEC) from 2013 to 2025. He co-chaired a review of Singapore's Research Centres of Excellence in 2017 and served on the Selection Panel for the NRF Fellowship in 2010. From 2006 to 2011, he was the Tan Chin Tuan Centennial Professor at the National University of Singapore (NUS).

4 A world authority on carbon-based semiconductors, Professor Friend is a Fellow of the Royal Society, a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, and a Foreign Member of the US National Academy of Engineering. He is a Laureate of the Millennium Technology Prize (2010) and a recipient of the Harvey Prize of the Israel Institute of Technology (2011), the von Hippel Award of the Materials Research Society (2015) and the Isaac Newton Prize of the Institute of Physics (2024). He was knighted for his Services to Physics in 2003.

5 See the [Annex](#) for the full biography of Professor Friend.

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About the Honorary Citizen Award

The title of Honorary Citizen is a national award conferred by the Singapore Government since 2003 to recognise and acknowledge the contributions of non-Singaporeans who have rendered extensive and valuable services to Singapore and its people, or who have made a significant impact in the areas of business, science and technology, information communications, education, health, arts and culture, sports, tourism and community services or security.

The Honorary Citizen Award is the highest form of national recognition for a non-Singaporean. The title of Honorary Citizen is conferred for life.

About the National Research Foundation (NRF)

The National Research Foundation (NRF) is a department within the Prime Minister's Office. The NRF sets the national direction for research and development (R&D) by developing policies, plans and strategies for research, innovation and enterprise. It also funds strategic initiatives and builds up R&D capabilities by nurturing research talent. The NRF aims to transform Singapore into a vibrant science and technology hub, with R&D contributing significantly to a knowledge intensive, innovation and entrepreneurial economy. Learn more about NRF here: <https://www.nrf.gov.sg/>

Annex: Full Biography of Professor Sir Richard Henry Friend

Professor Sir Richard Henry Friend is the Director of Research at the Department of Physics, University of Cambridge, and one of the world's foremost authorities on the physics, materials science, and engineering of semiconductor devices made from carbon-based semiconductors, particularly polymers. His research has shown that carbon-based semiconductors have significant applications in LEDs, solar cells, lasers and electronics – work that has been developed and commercialised through a number of spin-off companies he helped found. His current research is directed towards novel schemes to improve the performance and cost of solar cells.

2 Professor Friend's association with Singapore's research and innovation ecosystem spans more than two decades. From 2009 to 2024, he was a Member of the National Research Foundation's Scientific Advisory Board (SAB), and chaired the SAB from 2011 to 2024. As Chair, he led the formulation of recommendations to identify critical issues and emerging global trends in science and technology, as well as new areas of research, of strategic relevance to Singapore.

3 From 2013 to 2025, Professor Friend was a Member of the Research, Innovation and Enterprise Council (RIEC), which was chaired by the then-Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. He provided valuable inputs to the development of Singapore's five-year Research, Innovation and Enterprise (RIE) plans through RIE2015, RIE2020 and RIE2025, drawing on his deep expertise in science and its commercialisation.

4 In 2017, Professor Friend co-chaired a review of Singapore's Research Centres of Excellence (RCEs), which aimed to bring top international research talent to Singapore's universities and catalyse their transformation into research-intensive institutions. He also served on the Selection Panel for the 4th Call of the NRF Fellowship in 2010, which helped attract promising young scientists from around the world to conduct independent research in Singapore.

5 From 2006 to 2011, Professor Friend was the Tan Chin Tuan Centennial Professor at the National University of Singapore (NUS), and strengthened Singapore's research outcomes by fostering collaborations between NUS and the University of Cambridge.

6 Professor Friend is a Fellow of the Royal Society, a Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering, and a Foreign Member of the US National Academy of Engineering. His research has been recognised with numerous international awards, including the Millennium Technology Prize (2010), the Harvey Prize of the Israel Institute of Technology (2011), the von Hippel Award of the Materials Research Society (2015), and the Isaac Newton Prize of the Institute of Physics (2024). He was knighted for his Services to Physics in the Queen's Birthday Honours List in 2003.