

About the Author

Dr Balaji Sadasivan was born in Singapore on 11 July 1955, one of six children of Indian immigrants. His father was an accountant and his mother a housewife. He was educated at Raffles Institution, Siglap Secondary School and National Junior College. He obtained his medical degree from the University of Singapore in 1979. While at university, he won an essay competition held by the World Health Organization, which led to a study trip to Minamata, Japan. There, he witnessed the devastating effects of Minamata disease, a neurological syndrome that is caused by severe mercury poisoning. This experience stirred his interest in neurosurgery. He started training in neurosurgery at Tan Tock Seng Hospital in 1981. In 1984, he became a Fellow of the Royal College of Surgeons in Glasgow. He then did his residency in neurosurgery at the Henry Ford Hospital in Detroit from 1985 to 1989, and was awarded Distinction for his term as Chief Resident. In 1990, he was appointed Fellow in paediatric neurosurgery at Brigham and Women's Hospital, Harvard Medical School. He was President of the Asian-Australasian Society of Neurological Surgery from 1999-2003. Practising neurosurgery till 2001, he had to his credit more than 50 scientific publications and chapters in books on neurosurgery.

Although Dr Sadasivan excelled in medicine, his interests were not limited to it. He wrote a prize-winning full-length play entitled, "A Question of Duty" in 1978 when he was a fourth-year medical student. This was published in 1981. In 1999, he obtained a Bachelor of Laws (Honours) degree from the University of London. He was also a voracious reader, with a particular fascination with history, including the history of India.

In 2001, his horizons broadened ever further when he joined politics. He was elected Member of Parliament for Ang Mo Kio GRC in the Singapore General Election that year. Several ministerial appointments followed: Minister of State in the Ministry of Health (November

2001 to August 2004), Ministry of the Environment (November 2001 to May 2003) and the Ministry of Transport (May 2003 to August 2004). On 12 August 2004, he was promoted to Senior Minister of State in the Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts and the Ministry of Health. On 30 May 2006, he was appointed Senior Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dr Sadasivan was elected to the chairmanship of the World Health Organization's Executive Board in May 2007.

Active in community affairs, Dr Sadasivan was President of the Singapore Indian Education Trust; EXCO President of the Singapore Indian Development Association; Chairman of the Indian Heritage Centre's Steering Committee; Chairman of the National HIV/AIDS Policy Committee; Member of the Singapore Industrial and Services Employees' Union's Council of Advisors; Honorary Advisor to the Singapore Furniture Industries Council; Advisor to the People's Association's Indian Activity Executive Committee Co-ordinating Council; and Member of the National Steering Committee on Racial and Religious Harmony. He played a leading role in the National Art Gallery's Implementation Steering Committee.

Dr Sadasivan was diagnosed with colon cancer and had a tumour removed in 2008. Following a relapse, he died in Singapore on 27 September 2010.

He is survived by his wife, Dr Ma Swan Hoo, son, Dharma Yongwen Sadasivan, and daughter, Anita Jiawen Sadasivan. His medical school classmates have set up the Balaji Sadasivan Fund for Needy Medical Undergraduates in his memory.

On 23 June 2011, a \$35 million Health Endowment Fund set up by Temasek Holdings' charity arm, Temasek Cares, was named the Balaji Sadasivan Endowment Fund in recognition of his contributions to the healthcare sector.

