

# THE STRAITS TIMES

SINCE 1845

TUESDAY, MARCH 24, 2015

LEE  
KUAN  
YEW



SEPT 16, 1923  
TO  
MARCH 23, 2015



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and his wife Ho Ching receiving President Tony Tan Keng Yam and his wife Mary, who paid their respects to Mr Lee at Sri Temasek in the Istana yesterday. ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN

"I have spent my life, so much of it, building up this country.  
There's nothing more that I need to do. At the end of the day,  
what have I got? A successful Singapore.  
What have I given up? My life."

— Mr Lee Kuan Yew in his final years, as quoted by PM Lee in his address to the nation yesterday

## SINGAPORE MOURNS

■ Thousands pay tribute ■ Family wake today, lying in state from tomorrow ■ State funeral on Sunday

By **WARREN FERNANDEZ**  
EDITOR

SINGAPORE entered the post-Lee Kuan Yew era yesterday, with the passing of founding father Lee Kuan Yew, 91.

It was a day that had been widely anticipated, not least since Mr Lee himself had often spoken of the need for leadership succession and had pushed it relentlessly, giving up his own job as Prime Minister in 1990 after 31 years and while still robust at 67.

Yet, when the time finally came — he died at 3.18am yesterday at the Singapore General Hospital where he had been hospitalised since Feb 5

with severe pneumonia — there was a palpable sense of loss in the country, from the halls of the Istana to the streets of Tanjong Pagar.

As soon as the Prime Minister's Office announced the news an hour later, an unprecedented outpouring of tributes and messages of condolence began appearing online, and continued all day.

An emotional Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong fought back tears when he appeared live on television from the Istana at 8am to deliver the news that the first Prime Minister, his father, had died. He said he was "grieved beyond words".

"The first of our founding fathers is no more. He inspired us,

gave us courage, kept us together, and brought us here. He fought for our independence, built a nation where there was none, and made us proud to be Singaporeans. We won't see another man like him," he said.

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To many here and abroad, he said, "Lee Kuan Yew was Singapore. Singapore was his abiding passion. He gave of himself, in full measure, to Singapore. As he himself put it towards the end of his life and I quote, 'I have spent my life, so much of it, building up this country. There's nothing more that I need to do. At the end of the day, what have I got? A successful Singapore. What have I given up? My life.'"

PM Lee called on Singaporeans to honour Mr Lee's spirit, even as they mourned his loss, and work together to "build on his foundations, strive for his ideals, and keep Singapore exceptional and successful for

many years to come".

On hearing news of Mr Lee's passing, people immediately began making their way to the Istana, Tanjong Pagar and Parliament House, their numbers growing through the day. Many, both men and women, were wet-eyed.

At the Istana's Orchard Road gates, the crowd waited patiently to pen heartfelt condolence messages and catch a glimpse of Mr Lee returning to the grounds for the last time. When the silver hearse bearing his casket arrived at about 1pm, applause and cheers broke out, as

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## MILESTONES

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015

## EDITORIAL

## Keeping Mr Lee's legacy alive

LEE KUAN YEW was many things to Singaporeans: father figure, visionary, social disciplinarian and sage.

He was the man who played the decisive role in the creation of Singapore as the people know it today. "One day, this will be a metropolis. Never fear!" he once declared. The people believed in him, gave him and the nation's other founding fathers their support, and together they built modern Singapore.

He was astute enough to have surrounded himself with men of conviction who shared his vision. The original team of Goh Keng Swee, Toh Chin Chye, S. Rajaratnam, Lim Kim San, Hon Sui Sen and E.W. Barker were all titans in their own right.

But as the skipper, Mr Lee gained much of the credit for the successes that were to come. He was the doer-in-chief who outlined the plans, crystallised thoughts, marshalled the talents, swayed

the voters, and got things done. Singaporeans owe more than they can imagine to Mr Lee and his group of stout-hearted patriots.

He has died at the advanced age of 91, having soldiered on right to the end. He had seemed sad and somewhat withdrawn after the death of his wife, a soulmate and confidante he was devoted to. But for the better part of his post-leadership years - after giving up the prime ministership when he was at the peak of his powers - he had the satisfaction of seeing the results of a lifetime of dedication and toil. He has gone out a man fulfilled, confident in the knowledge that Singapore as an idea he crafted can endure.

Tears will still be shed at the death of a remarkable achiever and a patriot, but he would certainly not be impressed if Singaporeans became mawkish on his behalf. He was not a sentimental man,

only one who was passionate about his belief in Singapore.

The Singapore of today, standing 10 feet tall despite its slight base, is a monument to Mr Lee's daring, his leadership and his capacity for self-belief. It was he who made Singapore known to the world as a byword for sensible, pragmatic governance.

What he was not was a dreamer. He was not one for grandiose speeches, elegant theories or overly intellectual discourse. His guiding philosophy, as he said often, was simply to do "what works". By almost every Singaporean's reckoning, his legacy will be this: the Singapore he led in building will endure after him.

In moments of musing, he used to say this was not yet a nation. The roots were as yet shallow, the moorings not quite firm. He was an exacting man, always

worrying about the possible perils and pitfalls ahead, and seeking ways to avoid them. The values he left behind - meritocracy, racial and religious tolerance, integrity in public life, respect for the rule of law - will help secure Singapore's longevity.

Some of the self-proclaimed "knuckle-duster" methods he used to clear obstacles in his path and to counter critics - methods he said he had learnt through life-and-death struggles with communist and communalist opponents who did not believe in Queensberry rules - might be judged by some as harsh. They left even some of his admirers cold. Rightly or wrongly, he always acted in the firm belief that the fledgling nation's cause needed protecting from those whose agendas he was convinced would harm Singapore.

This tough-minded approach helped him to deliver results and improved the

people's lives, thereby winning their support, respect and trust. But by the 1980s, changing times required a different approach, which he recognised and urged on his younger colleagues. His successors will have to keep pace with this evolving political landscape if they are to enjoy the same high levels of esteem and support that the people had for the first-generation PAP Government led by Mr Lee.

That there is a Singapore - secure, successful and always seeking new ways to stay relevant in an unforgiving, changing world - is Mr Lee's legacy. He would often assert that Singapore was no ordinary country. To overcome the odds and survive, this city-state and disparate society had to be "special", even "extraordinary".

Singaporeans can pay him no more fitting tribute than to strive to ensure it stays that way.

## S'pore mourns 'father of nation'

**1923:** Born on Sept 16 to Shell Oil Company depot manager Lee Chin Koon and Chua Jim Neo in his family's two-storey bungalow at 92 Kampong Java Road.



**1935:** Came in first in Telok Kurau English School in an islandwide exam and won a place in Raffles Institution, where he met future wife Kwa Geok Choo in 1939. He previously attended two Chinese-medium schools.

**1940:** Topped the Senior Cambridge exams in Singapore and Malaya and won the Anderson Scholarship to read English, economics and mathematics at Raffles College.



**1946:** Began law school at the London School of Economics but moved to Cambridge University the next year, when Kwa joined him. They married secretly on Dec 23, 1947 in Stratford-upon-Avon.

**1950:** Called to the Bar at the Middle Temple after graduating the year before. Returned to Singapore, joined law firm Laycock & Ong and married Mrs Lee officially on Sept 30. They had three children: Hsien Loong (born in 1952); Wei Ling (1955); and Hsien Yang (1957).



**1954:** Formed the People's Action Party, inaugurated at Victoria Memorial Hall on Nov 21.



**1955:** Elected legislative assemblyman for Tanjong Pagar on April 2.

Founded his own law firm Lee & Lee with Mrs Lee and younger brother Dennis on Sept 1.

## FROM PAGE 1

well as cries of "Thank you, Mr Lee!"

Over at Tanjong Pagar, which Mr Lee represented for 60 years since 1955, thousands more turned out to pay tribute to the man some called the "father of the nation", bowing respectfully before a large portrait of him.

Retired calligrapher Seow Cheong Choon, 80, wept as he recounted how he had once railed against Mr Lee, doubting he would deliver on his promises to house Singapore's slum dwellers and squatters.

"He said he would give us all a house. Not just one or two people, but the thousands living in attap houses," he said in Mandarin. "I was angry with his promises of false hope. Who could believe him? Singapore was chaotic, muddy, full of gangsters."

He was referring to the time Mr Lee had declared at a 1965 grassroots event: "This country belongs to all of us. We made this country from nothing, from mudflats... Today, this is a modern city. Ten years from now, this will be a metropolis. Never fear!"

That vision was to become a reality, and one of those who lived through the city's transformation was Mr Seow, who moved into a new three-room flat in Kim Tian Road in the late 1960s.

Mr Lee led a pioneer generation of Singaporeans to overcome similarly daunting challenges, including rebuilding the economy after the sudden pullout of British forces and the oil shocks of the 1970s, and a major economic recession in the mid-1980s.

Little wonder then that he came to be regarded as the man most instrumental in shaping this country, from the time he and his People's Action Party colleagues pushed for self-government in the 1950s to their quest for merger with the Federation of Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak to form the new nation Malaysia in the early 1960s, and their efforts to secure the Republic's survival after independence was thrust on it on Aug 9, 1965.

He famously wept on TV announcing the "moment of anguish", when Singapore was "severed" from Malaysia. Not only had he believed deeply in a unified Malaysia as a multiracial society, but he must also have sensed the enormity of the task for the new city-state to make a living in an inhospitable world.

His decades in office were not uncontroversial. Having survived life-and-death battles with the communists and communalists in Singapore's troubled early years, he made plain that he was not

Community Tribute  
@ Tanjong Pagar

A family stands in reflection at Tanjong Pagar Community Club yesterday, where thousands turned up to remember the man who represented Tanjong Pagar for 60 years. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

averse to donning "knuckledusters" to take on and "demolish" his political adversaries. He refused to be swayed by popular sentiment or opinion polls, believing that voters would come round when they eventually saw the benefits of policies he had pushed through.

He was both a visionary and a radical thinker, and was instrumental in a host of major policies that have shaped almost every aspect of Singaporeans' lives, from promoting public housing, home ownership, racial integration in public estates and, later, estate upgrading, to adopting English as a common language for the disparate races in Singapore.

He made multiracialism and meritocracy as well as economically sound and corruption-free government hallmarks of the Singapore way. He carried over his own frugal ways to the business of government and was relentless in his fight against the "cancer of corruption", making plain no one was beyond being investigated and ejected from office if they

strayed.

He pushed for ministers and senior civil servants to be paid salaries pegged to private sector rates, despite that being controversial, believing it was necessary if Singapore was to continue to enjoy good, clean government.

And if this city gained a reputation worldwide for also being one of the cleanest and greenest, it was because the Prime Minister himself took a personal interest in enhancing the island's greenery, parks and waterways, long before such environmental consciousness became fashionable.

World leaders acknowledged this track record and were lavish with their accolades yesterday. Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak noted that Mr Lee's "achievements were great, and his legacy is assured", while Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed him as a "far-sighted statesman and a lion among leaders".

United States President Barack Obama said in a statement: "He was a true giant of history who will be remembered for genera-

tions to come as the father of modern Singapore and as one of the great strategists of Asian affairs."

At home, even opposition politicians who bore the brunt of Mr Lee's no-holds-barred broadsides put aside their partisan differences, with leaders such as those from the Workers' Party and Singapore Democratic Party extending their condolences to PM Lee and his family.

Yesterday was the first of a two-day private family wake at Sri Temasek in the Istana, when family members, past and present Cabinet ministers and MPs, as well as old friends of Mr Lee and his family paid their last respects. Among them were Brunei Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah, former Chief Justice Yong Pung How and Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka Shing.

Tomorrow, his body will be taken to Parliament House to lie in state until Saturday and members of the public will be able to pay their last respects. A State Funeral will be held on Sunday at 2pm at the University Cultural Centre in Kent Ridge, followed by a private cremation at Mandai Crematorium.

Mr Lee leaves his two sons, PM Lee, 63, and Mr Lee Hsien Yang, 57, daughter Lee Wei Ling, 60, daughters-in-law Ho Ching, 61, and Lee Suet-Fern, 56, seven grandchildren and two siblings. His wife, Madam Kwa Geok Choo, died in 2010 at the age of 89.

He had soldiered on with his public duties after retirement, and even after the loss of his wife of 63 years, whom he mourned deeply, but

mostly in private. They had married secretly as undergraduates in Cambridge in 1947, and Mr Lee is said to have instructed, in a note to his children, that when the time came, their ashes should be mixed so they might be "joined after life as they had been in life".

Summing up his life's work in his two-part memoirs, The Singapore Story, Mr Lee once revealed how he and his colleagues believed that Malaysian leaders anticipated the day when an independent Singapore would fail and be forced to appeal for readmission to the Federation, on Malaysia's terms.

"No, not if I could help it," he once declared. "People in Singapore were in no mood to crawl back after what they had been through. The people shared our feelings and were prepared to do whatever was needed to make an independent Singapore work. I did not know I was to spend the rest of my life getting Singapore not just to work, but to prosper and flourish."

warren@sph.com.sg

**1959:** Sworn in as Singapore's first Prime Minister at the age of 35 after PAP won 43 out of 51 seats in the general election.

**1960:** Enacted a law to wipe out corruption and establish a clean and effective government.

**1961:** Set up the Economic Development Board to draw foreign investments to an industrialising Singapore.

**1963:** Malaysia formed, comprising Malaya, Singapore, Sabah and Sarawak.

**1963:** Launched a home ownership scheme which enabled 91 per cent of Housing Board residents to own their homes by 1996.

**1965:** Singapore separated from Malaysia on Aug 9. Mr Lee wept on national TV, saying he had believed his whole life in the unity of the two territories.



**1967:** Full-time National Service introduced to build Singapore's defence force ahead of British troops' pullout in 1971.

**1990:** Stepped down as PM after 31 years and succeeded by Mr Goh Chok Tong. Appointed Senior Minister on Nov 28.

**1998:** Published first volume of memoirs The Singapore Story. Second volume, From Third World To First: The Singapore Story, was launched in 2000.

**2004:** Assumed the post of Minister Mentor after his son Hsien Loong became PM, and Mr Goh was made SM on Aug 18.

**2010:** Mrs Lee died on Oct 2 after a long illness caused by strokes.

**2011:** Mr Lee stepped down from the Cabinet.

**2015:** Died yesterday at 3.18am, leaving his three children and seven grandchildren.





Lee Kuan Yew  
Age: 91

Passed away peacefully on 23/03/2015

Dearly missed and fondly remembered by

Mdm Kwa Geok Choo (deceased)

Children & Spouses:

Lee Hsien Loong	Wong Ming Yang (deceased)
	Ho Ching
Lee Wei Ling	
Lee Hsien Yang	Lim Suet Fern

Grandchildren:

Li Xiuqi	Li Shengwu
Li Yipeng	Li Huanwu
Li Hongyi	Li Shaowu
Li Haoyi	

Private Family Wake : Sri Temasek, Istana  
23/03 (Monday) to 24/03 (Tuesday)

Lying in State : Parliament House  
25/03 (Wednesday) to 28/03 (Saturday)

State Funeral Service : University Cultural Centre  
29/03 (Sunday) 2pm

Private Cremation Service : Mandai Crematorium  
After State Funeral Service

The public may pay their respects at Parliament House  
from 10am to 8pm during the Lying in State

Condolences may also be expressed at  
[www.rememberingleekuan-yew.sg](http://www.rememberingleekuan-yew.sg)



Scan QR Code  
to go to website

The family respectfully requests no wreaths, flowers or condolence advertisements

Donations received will go to “Education Fund”, “NTUC-U Care Fund”,  
“Garden City Fund” and the community self-help groups



## ISTANA: FAMILY WAKE

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015

At the wake yesterday: (From left on facing page) Ms Ho Ching with DPM Teo Chee Hean and his family; DPM Tharman Shanmugaratnam and his wife, Ms Jane Yumiko Ittogi; Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen and his wife, Ms Ivy Ng; Education Minister Heng Swee Keat; Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Defence Chan Chun Sing (second from right) and Senior Minister of State for Education and Law Indranee Rajah (far right). ST PHOTOS: NEO XIAOBIN

# His body rests near the Istana lawns he loved

Visitors from ministers to nurses pay respects – some stoic, some in tears

By CHARISSA YONG

IT WAS a fitting resting place for the body of Singapore's founding Prime Minister.

Mr Lee Kuan Yew's casket was laid out in a simple room on the ground floor of Sri Temasek, the official residence of the Prime Minister in the Istana grounds.

In life, he had spent many happy moments taking strolls on the Istana's green lawns with his wife, Madam Kwa Geok Choo.

Yesterday, at a private family wake, the casket rested on a bed of white orchids in the two-storey detached terrace house.

More than 1,200 people paid their respects to Mr Lee, who died yesterday at the age of 91.

The mood at Sri Temasek was sombre. Staff members were dressed in crisp white shirts and black trousers, and wore a black band around their left elbow that signified mourning.

Several visitors, including political leaders past and present, also had black ribbons pinned to their shirts.

They were received by Mr Lee's elder son, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. Like many of his family members, PM Lee wore a white polo shirt, dark-coloured trousers and formal black shoes.

He moved among the guests, accepting their condolences and asking after them in turn.

Most Cabinet ministers and MPs were accompanied by their spouses. Others, like Deputy Prime Minister and Home Affairs Minister Teo Chee Hean, also took their children along.

Mostly in silence, they filed

past Mr Lee's immediate family members, who stood at the entrance to the hall.

What caught their eye was a black-and-white portrait of Mr Lee. Dressed in a dark suit with a mandarin collar, he gazed to the side, hands clasped contemplatively together.

As they approached the casket, some bowed their heads. Others said a simple prayer.

Several, like Dr Lily Neo, who was Mr Lee's fellow MP in Tanjong Pagar GRC, could not hold back their tears as they left the hall.

Mrs Lee Suet Fern, who is married to Mr Lee's son, Hsien Yang, comforted her.

Tables were laid out on the verandah outside the hall, where guests lingered for a while and spoke in hushed tones among themselves.

Many of Mr Lee's old comrades, who had fought alongside him in the politically tumultuous decades past, were there to catch a final glimpse of him. They included Mr Ong Pang Boon, Mr Othman Wok, Mr S. Dhanabalan, Mr Chan Chee Seng and Mr Hwang Soo Jin.

The widow of Singapore's first President, Mr Yusof Ishak, Puan Noor Aishah, was also there.

Calling Mr Lee a friend and a leader, she said: "We are indebted to him... for having been a good friend to us, to my late husband and to our family. Both Mr and Mrs Lee were very gracious to us."

Among the foreign guests in attendance yesterday was Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka Shing, who

was accompanied by his son, Richard.

Sultan of Brunei Hassanah Bolkiah and his wife, Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Hajah Saleha, also arrived in the afternoon.

Just before 4pm, President Tony Tan Keng Yam visited the wake with his wife, Mary.

Speaking to reporters afterwards, President Tan paused for long stretches at a time to collect himself. His voice was strained. Struggling to speak at points, he said: "(Mr Lee's) passing is an end of an era, and nobody can replace him."

"But we can honour his legacy by carrying on what he has started and that is to continue to make Singapore successful and a good home for Singaporeans for many years to come."

Other ministers were also visibly emotional. Foreign Minister K. Shanmugam and Education Minister Heng Swee Keat, who was Mr Lee's principal private secretary from 1997 to 2000, were red-eyed as they spoke to the media.

From about 5pm onwards, more grassroots groups and others representing businesses arrived to pay their respects.

There were also several nurses, dressed in their smart uniforms. Some were from Singapore General Hospital and others were colleagues of Mr Lee's daughter, Dr Lee Wei Ling, who is a senior adviser at the National Neuroscience Institute.

As the sun set and the warm lights of Sri Temasek came on, more visitors headed home, leaving small pockets of family members at the tables to talk quietly among themselves and to their guests.

The private wake ends today. [charyong@sph.com.sg](mailto:charyong@sph.com.sg)



## Best way to honour Mr Lee? 'Keep Singapore united and successful'

By RACHEL CHANG  
ASSISTANT POLITICAL EDITOR

SINGAPORE'S current generation of leaders urged Singaporeans to honour Mr Lee Kuan Yew by keeping the country united, and successful.

Building on what Mr Lee and his team put in place – especially upholding the values of multiculturalism, meritocracy, incorruptibility and bold policymaking – would be the best way to keep his legacy alive, they said.

"Everything that is Lee Kuan Yew is what will hold us well for

the future. Especially the way he kept looking to the future, looking for new opportunities, spotting problems before they arrive, preparing Singaporeans well," said Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam.

"That is what we've got to keep doing. That is the way we honour Mr Lee's legacy."

Mr Tharman was speaking to reporters after attending Mr Lee's private family wake yesterday at Sri Temasek, the Prime Minister's official residence.

Cabinet ministers and MPs

were among the 1,200 people in attendance.

Minister for Communications and Information Yaacob Ibrahim said Mr Lee "went out of his way" to apply the two principles of meritocracy and multiculturalism to all communities in Singapore.

"We have to continue that story... If not, we have nowhere else to go," said Dr Yaacob. "That is the thing that we must learn from him and we want to keep that alive, especially for the younger generation. Because without that, it is going to be a difficult journey for us."

Transport Minister Lui Tuck Yew said: "This is the time for Singaporeans to come together, united, in mourning... But I hope also, united in our collective determination to further his legacy of building a more dynamic and prosperous Singapore."

When most of Singapore's current leaders entered politics, Mr Lee was already well into his 70s. And I would have to discuss and debate with him, and sometimes he would change his view."

Noting that this is a mark of a great man, he added: "He understood what needed to be done and if he understood that the other point of view was better, he is prepared to cede the ground... He just wanted to find the best solution. We learnt a lot from him."

Law and Foreign Minister K. Shanmugam said: "Whether it

was policy, whether it was the ability to strategically see the long term, whether it was legal analysis, he was on top of it all."

He added: "It was wonderful to work with him. You had to be honest and if you didn't know, you had to tell him you didn't know. He appreciated the honesty. But he always expected you to have done your homework."

Said Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, holding back tears: "Mr Lee was like a father to all of us. Today's Singapore was his life's work and a gift to all of us."

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(Main picture) Mr Lee's casket lies on a bed of white orchids in a simple room on the ground floor of Sri Temasek. (Above) Former chief justice Yong Pung How (right) paying his respects. ST PHOTOS: NEO XIAOBIN



(From left on facing page) SPH Chairman Lee Boon Yang and his wife; former politician S. Dhanabalan hugging Ms Ho Ching; former minister of social affairs Othman Wok being helped by family members and Ms Ho Ching; Mr Lee's youngest brother Lee Suan Yew (right) with his daughter, Ms Shermay Lee (left); Singapore Press Holdings CEO Alan Chan shaking hands with Ms Ho Ching, with Maritime and Port Authority of Singapore CEO Andrew Tan (left). ST PHOTOS: NEO XIAOBIN, LAU FOOK KONG

## 'Let us honour his spirit and life's work'

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong addressed the nation on the death of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew yesterday. In an emotional speech that was broadcast live from the Istana at 8am, he paid tribute to the elder Mr Lee in Malay, Chinese and English. Initially calm and composed in a grey shirt and navy tie, PM Lee had to stop several times during the Chinese portion of his speech to gather himself before continuing.

### HIS REMARKS IN ENGLISH

"The first of our founding fathers is no more. He inspired us, gave us courage, kept us together and brought us here."

"He fought for independence, built a nation where there was none, and made us proud to be Singaporeans. We won't see another man like him."

"To many Singaporeans, and indeed others too, Lee Kuan Yew was Singapore. As Prime Minister, he pushed us hard to achieve what had seemed impossible."

"After he stepped down, he guided his successors with wisdom and tact. And in old age, he continued to keep a watchful eye on Singapore. Singapore was his abiding passion. He gave of himself in full measure to Singapore."

"As he himself put it, towards the end of his life, and I quote: 'I have spent my life, so much of it, building up this country. There's nothing more that I need to do. At the end of the day, what have I got? A successful Singapore. What have I given up? My life.'

"I'm grieved beyond words at the passing of Mr Lee Kuan Yew. I know that we all feel the same way."

"But even as we mourn his passing, let us also honour his spirit. Let us dedicate ourselves as one people to build on his foundations, strive for his ideals and keep Singapore exceptional and successful for many years to come."

"May Mr Lee Kuan Yew rest in peace."

### TRANSLATION OF HIS REMARKS IN MALAY

"I am deeply saddened to inform you that Mr Lee Kuan Yew has passed away."

"Mr Lee was Singapore's founding Prime Minister. He had dedicated his whole life to Singapore."

"He built a nation where there was none, and fought tenaciously for Singapore's independence."

"His indomitable courage and resourcefulness carried the day on many critical occasions, and laid the foundations of Singapore's success."

"We have lost the man who had led us, inspired us and united us. As we mourn Mr Lee's passing, let us also honour his spirit and his life's work."

"Let us continue building Singapore, strengthening our multiracial and multi-religious society, and standing together as one united people, something which he had fought for all his life."

"May Mr Lee Kuan Yew rest in peace."

### TRANSLATION OF HIS REMARKS IN CHINESE

"Today, we lost our beloved leader, founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew."

"Mr Lee is irreplaceable in our hearts. He has a special bond with Singaporeans and was well loved by them. "When he was hospitalised, people from all walks of life showed their care and encouragement in different ways."

"This was of great comfort to Mr Lee and my family. On behalf of my family, I would like to convey our sincere appreciation for your good wishes."

"Singapore's survival was Mr Lee's greatest concern throughout his life. He dedicated himself to Singapore, uniting us as one people and motivating us to be self-reliant. He took us from Third World to First, building a home that we can be proud of."

"His passing is a great loss to Singapore and my family."

"In this moment of grief, let us always remember Mr Lee's contributions."

"The best way to honour him would be to carry on his life's passion, and stay as one united people to keep Singapore prosperous and strong."

"May you rest in peace, Mr Lee."



## TRIBUTES: A NATION GRIEVES

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015

The hearse carrying the body of Mr Lee Kuan Yew arriving at the Istana yesterday. Whatever their political stripes, Singaporeans are grateful to Mr Lee for making Singapore what it is today – a country with safe and secure streets, a clean and green

environment, economic prosperity and a stable political system. One unsigned card that paid him tribute bore the elegantly conceived hashtag: “#NO YEW NO US.” ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

# The day Singaporeans set aside differences to say ‘thank you’

Tributes speak of a nation ready to face the future united and proud

By IGNATIUS LOW  
MANAGING EDITOR

THEY came dressed in black, some clutching white roses, carnations and lilies.

There were mothers who had just picked up their sons and daughters from school, civil serv-

ants with their elderly parents and lone executives who had taken an hour off their busy work schedules.

As Singaporeans from all walks of life streamed to the four condolence sites to pay their respects to the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew, one question awaited them at the end

of the queues they had patiently joined.

What do you say to the founder and architect of modern Singapore? What can you write, in that minute or two, that can adequately sum up the way you feel?

Many simply said “thank you”, going by the hundreds of little notes penned on white cards at the Istana and Parliament House yesterday.

They thanked Mr Lee for making Singapore what it is today – a country with safe and secure

streets, a clean and green environment, economic prosperity and a stable political system.

In achieving this, he was a great leader destined to be remembered, many added. “Your legacy needs no statues or museums, it is all around us today,” read one card.

Some tributes were written in foreign languages like Japanese and others were signed off by foreign workers, expats and tourists.

A few had so much to say that they ran out of space, their words

growing desperately smaller as they reached the bottom right-hand corner of the card.

Others were more succinct, like one unsigned card I saw that bore just one elegantly conceived hashtag: “#NO YEW NO US.”

Some of the notes were philosophical, with many simply wishing Mr Lee *yi lu hao zou* (a Chinese phrase for “safe journey”) in the afterlife. A few said they were glad that he was reunited with his wife and love of his life, Madam Kwa

Geok Choo, who died in 2010. Not all the authors of the notes were older Singaporeans who had lived through the Lee Kuan Yew era.

Many young students penned tributes, with photo collages depicting Singapore’s success and child-like drawings of flowers and the sun.

Those who were too young to know him or his politics cited those who did.

“My late grandma adores you, sir. R.I.P.” was the one line on a card at Parliament House signed

off simply as “Jen”.

Reading it, I could not help but smile. For whether one had known Lee Kuan Yew, or agreed with him, or even liked him seemed immaterial to Singaporeans in the immediate aftermath of the news of his death early yesterday.

I have a long list of Facebook friends who wear political stripes in every colour. I’ve come to know that many are unafraid to voice their views, and some are downright strident and combative.

But all put aside their differences to post online tributes to the man yesterday, turning my Facebook news feed into a virtual reunion of old friends that I haven’t heard from in months, even years.

Many penned simple messages thanking him and wishing him peaceful rest. Those who did not have the words posted tribute videos or links to media obituaries extolling his achievements.

“Many today and before us remain divided about the steadfast

decisions you have made,” wrote one friend, summing up the view of many. “However, all can see or enjoy the legacy of your decisions. Thank you Mr Lee, I am proud to share your surname.”

Another friend, whose father was a political dissident arrested and jailed by Mr Lee’s government in the turbulent 1960s, said: “If there is one thing your life taught me, it is that one must sometimes be more unreasonable than the toughest thug in town to make a reasonable dream come

true.”

For me, it felt like a rare moment of national unity that I haven’t seen in a long time in Singapore.

For better or for worse, so much of the conversation here in the last decade or so has centred on the deficiencies of this nation, how discontented we have become with the status quo and how hard it is to compromise on every difference of opinion.

It was refreshing to see people count their blessings for once and

be openly thankful for being able to “walk down the streets safely with my earphones plugged in, blasting away”. Or for the “education I received that I’m able to read official letters my English illiterate mother is unable to”, without worrying about what this might say about them or their politics.

It was great to see people here declare they are proud to be Singaporean, yesterday or any other day, and that they “beam with pride when I produce my passport

to immigration officers”.

So my biggest takeaway from the day after Mr Lee Kuan Yew died was not that the nation collectively grieved the loss of a great leader, but rather that it appeared ready to face the future united and proud.

And the tribute card that ultimately made me cry was the one that said: “Thank you, Mr Lee. We will not let anyone knock the country you spent your whole life to build.”

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## 13,000 messages left by mourners at Istana

By CHONG ZI LIANG

IT WAS 5am, and security supervisor S. N. Pillai, 50, was two hours from the end of his shift when his sister called him, distressed.

Mr Lee Kuan Yew has died, she said, crying. Mr Pillai turned on the radio and received confirmation that the former Prime Minister had passed away at 3.18am. After finishing work just after dawn, Mr Pillai rushed down by bus from his workplace at the Thai Embassy, to the gates of the Istana, where he was one of the very first to arrive by 7.30am.

He was among a handful who stood in silence until an area was set up to receive condolence messages. And by 11pm yesterday, Singaporeans had penned 13,000 messages on postcard-sized cards outside the Istana, and 2,000 outside Parliament House.

Mr Pillai said: “As a Singaporean, I have to show my respect to Mr Lee. If I don’t, it’s like not respecting my parents, because Mr Lee is like a father to me.”

Throughout the day, people came to write tributes or leave cards and flowers. The arrival of the lunchtime crowd saw the queue snake about 100m to the

front of Plaza Singapura. Boards displaying written tributes were filled and bouquets of flowers stacked in piles.

As mourners streamed in, many told The Straits Times that Mr Lee was a paternal figure in their lives.

Housewife Siti Aishah, who learnt of Mr Lee’s death in the wee hours when she turned on the television, said: “He was a father of communication. He made English the language here so we can talk among races and also to the world. You’re Chinese and I’m Malay but we can speak to one another.”

The 50-year-old also hailed Mr Lee’s stewardship. “I’ve seen the improvement over the years. I lived in a Paya Lebar kampung until I moved to a flat in Bedok in Primary 6,” she said.

“Even (United States President) Barack Obama came to Mr Lee for advice. A big man from a big country came to listen to a small country.”

Like Madam Siti Aishah, management consultant Carolyn Chin praised the high standard of governance that Mr Lee instilled. The 40-year-old lived overseas for 18 years before returning home three

years ago. “It takes living overseas to make one realise how good our Government is,” she said.

“He made education compulsory, looked after the welfare of so many people. It’s because of him that we feel safe to be in our own country.”

“I’ve never felt prouder to be Singaporean,” she added, wiping away tears.

Many also reflected on the passing of an era. “Singapore will never be the same again. I wish he had stayed with us until the SG50 celebrations – he was there at the beginning of independence, after all,” said hotel front office assistant Revathi Mohan, 31.

Retiree Robert Ngiew, 63, said: “It’s a loss of a great man. I have tremendous respect for him. He is modern Singaporean.”

At about noon, people began lining both sides of the Istana’s main entrance ahead of the arrival of the hearse transporting Mr Lee’s body to Sri Temasek.

When it swung into view, spontaneous applause broke out. A few people called out Mr Lee’s name. “Thank you, Lee Kuan Yew!” they shouted, as he made his final entrance into the premises.

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Five-year-old Ryan Mackay (left), accompanied by his mother Sharon Tan, a 39-year-old lawyer, was the first to leave a written tribute at the Istana yesterday. Throughout the day, cards and flowers piled up. ST PHOTOS: DESMOND FOO



The arrival of the lunchtime crowd saw the queue to leave tributes at the Istana grow to about 100m. By 11pm yesterday, Singaporeans had penned 13,000 messages on postcard-sized cards outside the Istana. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO



Three-year-old Muhammad Iman Moehammad Ariffin placing a flower at the Istana. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



Many mourners told The Straits Times that Mr Lee was a paternal figure in their lives. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO



Puan Noor Aishah speaking to PM Lee and Ms Ho Ching at the wake yesterday. With them are (from left) her granddaughter Fatimah Inman Yusoff Ishak and son Rayyan, and friends Najma Begum and Sakdiah Mohamed Din. ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN



A woman in tears after the hearse carrying Mr Lee’s coffin was driven past the Istana. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

### PRICELESS GIFT

“When I was growing up, I would hear my parents describe Mr Lee Kuan Yew as the greatest man alive who gave his people, especially the minorities, the ability to live with dignity and in safety.

“I could not have in my wildest dreams imagined that one day, my parents’ hero would give me the privilege of working for him. Words cannot adequately describe what has been the greatest, most unforgettable, experience of my life.

“It was not possible to leave a meeting with him without being spellbound. He was the consummate teacher, giving his time and attention to every detail, even if it was just to show me how to elegantly sharpen a barb.

“I do not know why the stars contrived to give Mr Lee Kuan Yew to Singapore or why they bestowed

on me the priceless gift of working for him. But they did, and for that, my family and I shall always be grateful.”

– Mr Davider Singh, chief executive of law firm Drew & Napier, who represented Mr Lee in many successful court cases

### CHAMPION OF JUSTICE

“Mr Lee was a lifelong champion of the rule of law and from the outset of his tenure as Prime Minister he set out to eradicate corruption in public institutions. To Mr Lee, the worth of a legal system was to be assessed not simply by the greatness or grandeur of its theoretical underpinnings but, more importantly, by whether it operated well at a practical level to ensure order and justice in dealings among citizens and also in the relationship between the citizenry and the State.

“These ideals remain relevant to

the judiciary and to our society today, as we persevere in our quest to ensure that justice is fair and accessible to all.”

– Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon

### FRIEND AND LEADER

“I feel very sad, we have lost a friend, a leader.

“We are indebted to him, for having served so long and for having been a good friend to us, to my late husband and to our family. We will never forget his deeds.

“We pray and hope God rewards him and his family, and keeps Singapore safe and successful.”

– Puan Noor Aishah, the widow of Singapore’s first president Yusoff Ishak

### CONSTANT REMINDER

“Over the last few years, he has never once failed to remind us how fragile our achievements have been

and that it is incumbent upon all of us, the younger generation and all Singaporeans, to make sure that we keep this dream of ours to be free and independent going.”

– Social and Family Development Minister Chan Chun Sing

### GREAT LEGACY

“To me, he is the most important person in my adult life. As far as Singaporeans are concerned, we owe him an eternal debt for our present well-being. (After the news of Mr Lee’s death) I was surprised the stock market didn’t plunge at all. People are confident in the continuity, the reliability of the present Government to continue to give us stability and prosperity. I think that is one of his greatest legacies.”

– Mr Hwang Soo Jin, who was MP of Jalan Kayu from 1968 to 1984



## TRIBUTES: A NATION GRIEVES

*Mr Lee Kuan Yew*  
1923 - 2015



Residents of Everton Park, in Tanjong Pagar GRC, paying their respects to Mr Lee Kuan Yew. They arrived with flowers and waited in quiet grief for their turn to write messages of condolences. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

# Tearful residents pay respects to their MP

Young and old, people in Mr Lee's Tanjong Pagar GRC mourn his death

By RACHEL AU-YONG

AS A young man, Mr Seow Cheong Choon had little faith in Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

"When we were kicked out of Malaysia, he said he would give us all a house. Not just one or two people, but the thousands living in attap houses."

"I was angry with his promises of false hope. Who could believe him? Singapore was chaotic, muddy, full of gangsters," recounted Mr Seow. Now 80, he has lived almost all his life in the Tiong Bahru ward, in Tanjong Pagar GRC, that Mr Lee represented for 60 years.

Yesterday, the retired calligrapher wept as he described how his faith in Singapore's first Prime Minister grew over the years.

It began in 1968 when he and his wife, Madam Lee Geok Hwa, now 70, moved from the ramshackle attap house they shared with about 15 people to a three-room HDB flat in Tiong Bahru's Kim Tian Road.

His faith grew as more homes and schools were built, jobs were created with increasing foreign investments, and Singapore's armed forces advanced.

Yesterday, he and his wife were among about 5,000 Tanjong Pagar residents who turned up at their community club to bid goodbye, many tearfully, to their MP.

They arrived with flowers and waited in quiet grief for their turn to write messages of condolences. Mr Seow was in tears as he bowed before a black-and-white portrait of Mr Lee and, in a final show of respect, saluted.

A tearful Mr Mohan Ramakrish, 47, recalled his father's gratitude as he lay sick in Singapore General Hospital.

"My father said he was proud to see a C-class ward with clean bedsheets and a fan that kept the room well-ventilated. I couldn't understand it at first, but he told me that I didn't know what Singapore was like before Mr Lee," the financial adviser said.

"My father kept Mr Lee's photo in his shirt's breastpocket till the day he died. I'm grateful Mr Lee was my MP, too."

Younger Singaporeans like regional account manager Linn Lee were just as overwhelmed.

Said the 29-year-old: "It has been non-stop tears since I found out he had passed away. I know some in my generation disagree with his policies, but without him, where would we be today?"

"I'm worried about how his legacy will continue beyond Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong."

Senior Minister of State for Law and Education Indranee Rajah, an MP in Tanjong Pagar GRC who had been helping the late Mr Lee with his Meet-the-People sessions, said in her tribute that he was a man who "did not forget the common man".

During the 2003 Sars crisis, while many were pre-occupied with safety measures like temperature-taking, Mr Lee wanted to know about the plight of taxi drivers as he had heard people were avoiding taking cabs.

"That struck me deeply, because in the midst of all the big-picture planning, he did not forget the common man," she told reporters at the Tanjong Pagar Community Club.

Minister for Social and Family Development Chan Chun Sing, another MP in the GRC, and Minister of State Sam Tan, MP of neighbouring Radin Mas, were also at the club to pay their respects and comfort residents.

Former MP Koo T sai Kee, who is second adviser to grassroots organisations in Mr Lee's ward, said the late leader never stopped being a mentor.

"He told me it was important to get grassroots work done. 'Let government policies do good in the medium and long term. But in the short term, that's where MPs come in. They must ensure the people get their day-to-day problems solved.'"

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Mr Seow Cheong Choon, 80, wept yesterday as he described how his faith in Singapore's first Prime Minister grew over the years. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



Mr Richard Kan, 39, and his mother, Madam Lui Wan Yin, 69, viewing a photo tribute to Mr Lee Kuan Yew. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



A sombre Mr Liou Heng Chai, 56, and his mother, Madam Lee Siew San, 83, were among the mourners who turned up to honour their late MP and Singapore's first Prime Minister. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



Madam Ang Kuan Kuan, 64, a consultant, is overcome with emotion as she signs the condolence book at the Tanjong Pagar Community Club. She also left flowers in memory of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



A candle light-up to remember and honour Mr Lee Kuan Yew. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

## President: He was architect of our modern Republic

By WALTER SIM

SINGAPORE was Mr Lee Kuan Yew's passion, and he continued to serve the country until the last days of his life, wrote President Tony Tan Keng Yam in a condolence letter to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong yesterday.

"Few have demonstrated such complete commitment to a cause greater than themselves," said Dr Tan, writing on behalf of the people of Singapore.

Mr Lee devoted his entire life to Singapore, he said, from his first position as a legal adviser to the unions in the 1950s to his "undisputed role as the architect of our modern Republic".

When independence was foisted upon the country, many doubted Singapore would survive.

But Mr Lee rallied the people, leading the Cabinet to "successfully build up our armed forces, develop our infrastructure and transform Singapore into a global metropolis", said Dr Tan.

Many aspects of daily life bear his imprint, added Dr Tan - Mr Lee set up the Housing and Development Board to develop public

housing estates, giving "every citizen a stake in the nation".

He had the vision of establishing Singapore as a Garden City during the early years of urban development, and, today, Singapore River forms part of Marina Bay, a valuable source of fresh water.

"Because of Mr Lee's foresight, Singapore is hailed as a model of sustainable and inclusive development," said the President.

He noted Mr Lee's "lasting contributions" in building a meritocratic and multicultural Singapore, where the most deserving candidates - regardless of race or religion - would be acknowledged.

That each ethnic group learns its mother tongue, too, allowed Singaporeans to "leverage on our bilingual and bicultural edge to take advantage of the opportunities" around the world.

On top of that, the late Mr Lee "placed service before self-interest", said Dr Tan. While he stepped down as Prime Minister in 1990 to allow for smooth leadership renewal with a team of younger Cabinet colleagues, he continued to serve as Senior Minister un-

til 2004, and then as Minister Mentor until 2011.

Dr Tan said: "He had spent more than 50 years in the Cabinet and was the world's longest-serving Prime Minister when he stepped down in 1990."

And on foreign relations, "Mr Lee's brilliant intellect and candour of opinion led many international leaders and foreign diplomats to seek his views on developments in the region and around the world", noted Dr Tan. For example, Mr Lee was one of the first to recognise China's potential under its then leader Deng Xiaoping's reforms.

In a video message, Dr Tan also credited Mr Lee with building up a capable civil service.

And as Dr Tan told reporters separately yesterday at the private wake at Sri Temasek: "His passing is an end of an era and nobody can replace him."

"But we can honour his legacy by carrying on what he has started, and that is to continue to make Singapore successful and a good home for Singaporeans for many years to come."

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## ESM Goh: He gave us a country we can be proud of

By LEE HUI CHIEH

WHEN Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong heard that Mr Lee Kuan Yew, 91, had died yesterday, tears welled up in his eyes.

Less than two hours later, he paid tribute to the man whom he described on his Facebook page as his "leader, mentor, inspiration, the man I looked up to most".

Later, in a letter to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the late Mr Lee's son, Mr Goh said that he and his wife were "deeply distressed" by the news:

"Your family has lost its patriarch, and Singapore its key founding father. We share your grief, and can only offer you and your family our profound condolences."

Mr Lee Kuan Yew dedicated his life to Singapore. He lived and worked to build a nation and to advance the well-being of Singaporeans. For many Singaporeans - members of the pioneer generation in particular - he will forever be in our grateful hearts. He gave

us a country we can be proud of, a better life we can aspire to."

Mr Goh, 74, who took over the reins as Prime Minister from Mr Lee in 1990, said Mr Lee helped him succeed in the role: "Outside your family, I probably have benefited more than anyone from his guidance and advice."

They "enjoyed a warm relationship" and had lunch fortnightly until Mr Lee grew unwell, he said. Mr Goh last saw Mr Lee on Feb 5, when he was admitted to Singapore General Hospital with severe pneumonia. "It pained me to see him sedated and unaware of his surroundings," Mr Goh wrote.

He recalled that Mr Lee had been devastated in 1992 to learn that PM Lee - then 41 and Deputy Prime Minister - had been diagnosed with lymphoma.

"Outwardly, however, Mr Lee braved on with little hint of his personal emotions to his hosts. His stoicism and message were clear - we must not be deterred,

however daunting life's interventions," Mr Goh wrote.

"Your father's virtues, morals and habits - integrity, resilience, hard work, discipline, frugality, daily exercise, to name a few - are legendary, as are his demands of high standards of performance. Much of today's 'Singapore DNA' can be traced to his character, philosophy and values."

Mr Goh encouraged PM Lee to take heart from his countrymen's respect for and gratitude to Mr Lee, to carry on with his father's work.

"As Prime Minister, you lead a nation in mourning the demise of its greatest son, even as you grieve the passing of your father. Condolences cannot erase the pain of your bereavement. May Singaporeans' deep respect for your father and their gratitude for his lifelong service to our nation give you the strength to continue his life's work of making Singapore strong, secure and prosperous," he wrote.

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### 'LIKE MY OWN FATHER'

"The biggest contribution Mr Lee made was how he governed Singapore. The changes are great. We used to live in attap houses. The roads were curved and full of potholes. Now they are even and straight. Malays and Chinese used to fight each other. Now we are united. My daughter shook his hand before. She told me it was warm, because of the hundreds of people who shook his hand before her. She said he was like 'gong gong' (grandfather), and it makes me think of my father. In many ways, he was."

- Madam Ng Siew Ching, 56, housewife, resident of Tanjong Pagar since 1997

### HE DELIVERED ON HIS PROMISES

"I wanted to come by (the day before) to wish him good health. But today, I have to settle for goodbye instead. I will remember the man whose vision made Singapore 100 years ahead of its time. When he cried on TV in 1965, we could feel his sadness. He didn't know what was going to happen, neither did we. But he made us promises, and he delivered on all of them."

- Madam Ang Kuan Kuan, 64, consultant

### TRIBUTE FROM 3 GENERATIONS

"My parents came to Singapore in 1963, when this was still a part of Malaysia. They set up a family here in a peaceful country. I brought my daughter here even though she's very young because I want her to know our founding father. He and the pioneers made a country out of nothing."

- Mr Long Kiong Heng, 45, engineer, who paid tribute alongside his mother Madam Tiong Siew Choo, 75, and daughter Josephine, three





# Mourning in uniquely Singaporean style

Thousands queue to pen tributes, many go online, while others buy 4D

By CHUA MUI HOONG  
OPINION EDITOR

MRS P. Pusparani had not slept well since Saturday. That was the day she rushed down to the Singapore General Hospital on hearing that Mr Lee Kuan Yew was critically ill.

This was why she was awake in the wee hours of the morning yesterday. Just after 4am, she learnt that Mr Lee had died shortly before, at 3.18 am. She was distraught. Tears gushed.

"The first placard I wrote for this morning was covered by so much tears I had to write another one," she said.

The 57-year-old housewife was at the gates of the Istana yesterday morning. She told The Straits Times: "I will grieve for the entire year. I can't imagine a Singapore without Lee Kuan Yew. Singapore is Lee Kuan Yew and Lee Kuan Yew is Singapore."

Singaporeans mourned Mr Lee in their own ways. In Aljunied, one housewife stayed glued to the television, following the news and commemorative programmes. In Holland, another woman asked family members to shut off the radio and television, unable to bear the sadness.

Thousands travelled down to the Istana, or to Tanjong Pagar Community Club (CC), or to Parliament House, to pen condolence messages and leave cards, flowers and soft toys.

But the display of grief was also orderly in a quintessentially Singaporean way, with people forming queues along Orchard Road, pinning their messages neatly onto condolence boards, using up 13,000 condolence cards handed out to mourners outside the Istana.

Many, including those who had never met him, shed tears, feeling both gratitude for what Mr Lee had done for Singapore, and a sense of loss at the death of the father of the nation and the passing of an era.

Over at Tanjong Pagar CC, Mr James Loo, 59, was dry-eyed but his heart was heavy. Fifty years ago, his parents operated a stall at the street market nearby, selling eggs and tauheh (bean sprouts). As a young boy, he met Mr Lee when the latter did his rounds of the market, talking to market vendors and solving their problems.

"The street market lay at the end of a slope. When it rained, the drains would overflow. Mr Lee took care of us. Look at the beautiful market and food centre now," he said, gesturing towards the building a stone's throw away.

The son of the egg-seller is today the chief information officer of Singtel Group Enterprise.

Across the nation, many Singaporeans from all walks of life reflected on the way their own lives had moved from Third World to First, in parallel with the development of the nation led by Mr Lee and his Old Guard colleagues.

Ms Aveline Sum's father was an odd-job labourer who eventual-

ly settled into a steady job as a bus driver for 30 years, raising three children with his seamstress wife. Growing up, Ms Sum depended on union bursaries for pocket money and to pay for school expenses. Scholarships helped her get a degree and then, a Master's. She joined the labour movement and is now, at 46, CEO of Singapore Labour Foundation.

The bus driver's daughter now sits on the board of bus and taxi company ComfortDelGro.

She said: "It was the meritocratic system set by Mr Lee and his colleagues that gave people like me opportunities in education and employment."

Opportunities in Singapore were what lured new citizens here – and many turned up, joining born-and-bred Singaporeans in their mourning.

Standing in line at Tanjong Pagar CC, Mr Stanley Lai, 46, who works in the marine industry, said in Mandarin that he emigrated from Hong Kong to Singapore in 1991 and became a citizen in 1995. Asked about his feelings when he first heard of Mr Lee's death, he paused, then said: "So many emotions. I really respect him, he laid the foundation for us and for the country. Without him, I would not be here."

Mr Sun Chen Hin, 64, left Malaysia as he did not see a future for himself there, and took a gamble on Singapore in 1969.

He went on to become a manager at a bicycle components manufacturer. Now retired, he said in Mandarin that Singapore finds its own way as a society. It is a highly developed economy that did not copy Western ideals of democracy, he said with pride, adding that he tries to make sure his daughter understands just how "unique" Singapore is.

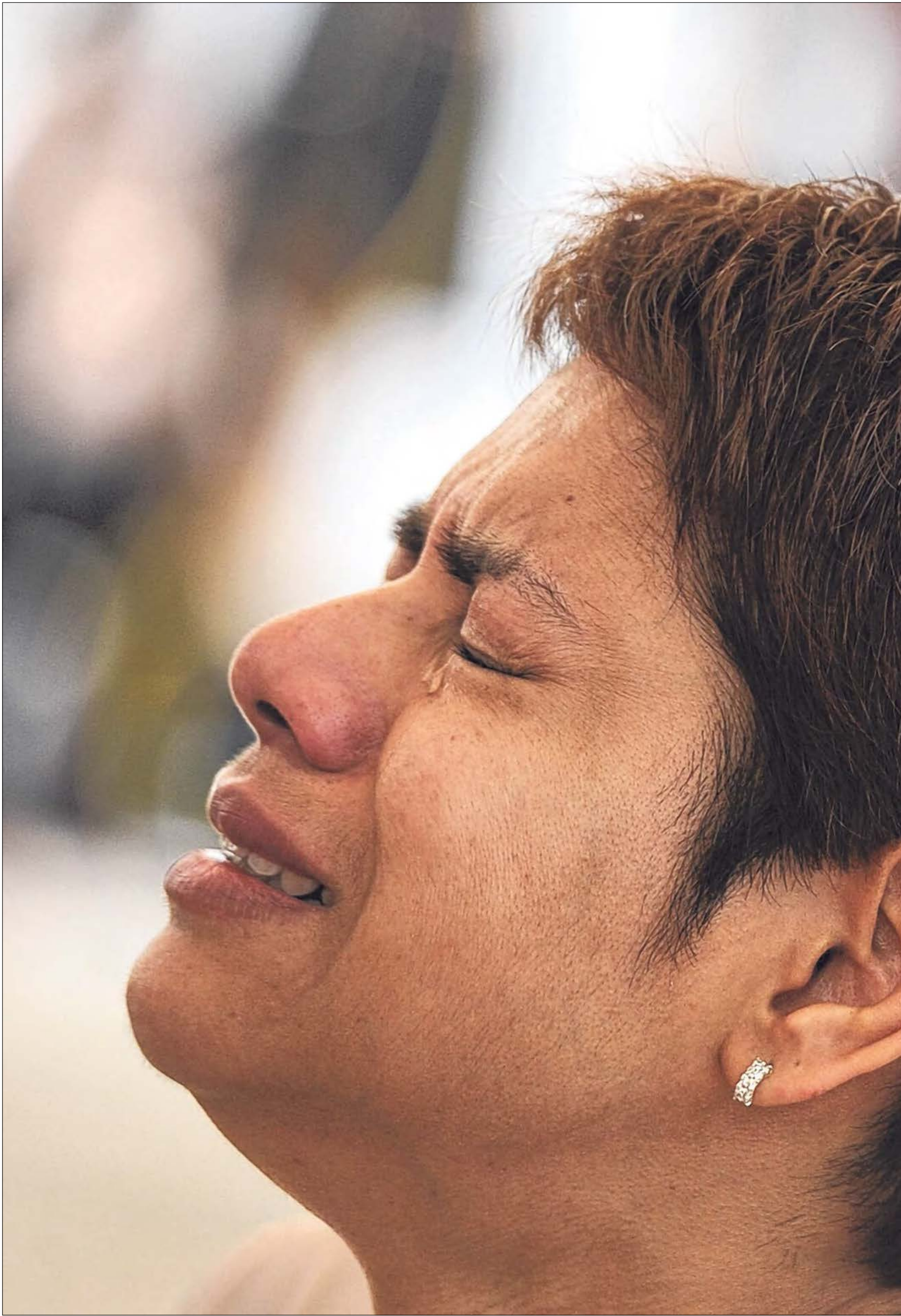
He penned a tribute to Mr Lee in Chinese: "China has Sun Yat Sen, we have Lee Kuan Yew. Two great men in one generation. We will miss you."

Singaporeans also took to social media to pay tribute, penning messages on the remembering-leekuan-yew.sg website and creating digital icons to share.

In another uniquely Singaporean habit, thousands rushed to 4D outlets to buy their pick of numbers relating to Mr Lee. The number 0318 (his time of death) was unavailable by 8am. By 1pm, numbers like 2303 (his death date) and 1609 (his birth date) were sold out, as too many had bought tickets with those numbers, and the house was no longer accepting bets with them.

But for hundreds of thousands other Singaporeans, it was another Monday at the office – although not quite work as usual. Lawyer Andrew Mak, 45, said the mood at his office was unusually quiet and sombre. "Everyone's continuing with work and getting things done. That would be what Mr Lee wanted – that Singapore continues to thrive."

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Additional reporting by Chong Zi Liang



Fifty-year-old Aisha Eltscha grieving for Mr Lee at the Singapore General Hospital yesterday. She made her way there after finding out about his death on her way to work. "My family does not have much wealth, but his ideology and compassion have helped us. He has touched my heart," she said. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG



A wall of flowers and tributes for Mr Lee Kuan Yew at Singapore General Hospital, where he died yesterday. ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH



Pupils at Telok Kurau Primary School, where Mr Lee was enrolled in 1930, observing a minute's silence for the statesman. ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM

## Special assemblies at Mr Lee's former schools

By KASH CHEONG

SCHOOLS that Mr Lee Kuan Yew once attended mourned his death with special assemblies yesterday.

In the school halls of Raffles Institution (RI) and Telok Kurau Primary School, Mr Lee's alma maters, the principals shared their thoughts on Singapore's first Prime Minister.

Telok Kurau Primary's principal, Ms Charis Wong, credited Mr Lee for Singapore's transformation into a global city in decades. Addressing hundreds of pupils, she added: "He was a loving husband to his wife and a loving father too."

Since yesterday, the pupils have been penning condolence messages on heart-shaped cards.

They also folded flowers, which will be collected into bouquets.

These will be presented by staff and student representatives when they pay their last respects at Parliament House later this week.

Library resources and reading materials on Mr Lee will be used

as part of lessons this week.

"Our pupils have always known Mr Lee as one of our alumni and are proud to be in a school where Mr Lee was once a student," Ms Wong said.

Mr Lee enrolled in the school in 1930. It still keeps an old class attendance book with the words "Lee Harry" in its heritage room.

Mr Lee was not only a statesman. Policies he mooted made an impact on Ms Wong's life.

Choking back tears, she said: "I didn't grow up in a well-to-do family, but Singapore's system of

meritocracy gave me opportunities and brought me to where I am today."

At RI, which Mr Lee attended from 1936 to 1940, students remembered him as a man of conviction, who always had the country's best interests at heart.

Rafflesian Arii Jabbar, 15, said: "Not all his policies were popular, but whatever he did, he believed (in it). He had the best intentions for Singapore at heart."

It's his determination that I will remember him for."

Said RI principal Chan Poh

Meng: "He dedicated his life to building a cohesive society where Singaporeans can pursue justice, peace, progress and equality."

"He was a leader and among the core group of founding fathers who were pivotal in charting the course of our nation's history."

"His passing is a deep loss to all of us."

All schools flew the national flag at half-mast across the island yesterday.

They also observed a minute's silence for Mr Lee.

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### LIKE A FATHER

"My father believed in him and I believed in him. We are of different races but we speak the same language and it is thanks to Mr Lee. I am a minority, but he gave us minority rights."

I was part of the cleaning crew of the Singapore River in my teens. He came to visit us. It was like seeing a movie star – Jackie Chan, Bruce Lee. He was so down-to-earth, he did not speak like a prime minister, he spoke like a father. He told us: 'Don't feel dirty, it is our nation you are cleaning.' Until today, I pick up rubbish when I see it on the

ground, because this is our nation.

He is a leader who can never be replaced. He made a red dot into a shining star in the world.

Thank you, Mr Lee. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

– Mr S. Gunasegaran, 51, looked to the sky and, with clasped hands, gave thanks to Mr Lee. An cleaning specialist, he was outside the Istana yesterday morning

### KINDNESS TO A BOY

"I liked to go to political rallies as a boy and I went to one at Bukit Panjang Primary School when I was 15.

When I saw Mr Lee arriving with his supporters, I wanted to get his autograph.

So I went up to his security officers to ask for permission. He was sitting down but he heard me and turned around. Mr Lee waved me over and signed my notebook. Then he said: 'Be a good boy.' I will forever feel fortunate to have his signature.

– Mr R.S. Jalprakash, 65, retired security officer

### ENCOURAGING TO COUPLE

"When the kindergarten was opened, Mr Lee was guest of honour. He saw me and my husband trying to get to him, and he waved us over and asked us how many kids we had. I said we had three. And he smiled and said, 'Good of you.'"

– Housewife and Pinnacle@Duxton resident Joey Chew, 39, who went with two of three children to the commemoration centre at Tanjong Pagar

### SOUND POLICY

"My parents were poor street hawkers selling coffee by the roadside when Mr Lee started building hawkker centres. My parents used to tell me how grateful they were when they managed to get a stall at the Kallang Airport food centre to sell drinks.

The stall helped them to support me and my three brothers through school. It gave them the opportunity to make a decent living and raise four children, and we were happy."

– Ms Thian Hwee Keong, 61, patient service associate

### FRANK NATURE

"I came today to say goodbye and to thank him for his service and dedication to Singapore. It feels like my own father has passed away. My parents lived through his time and they always expressed to me their gratitude to Mr Lee. I am still young, so maybe I don't get all his hard policies and his frank nature. But I am living in benefit of these hard policies, living in luxury compared with women in many other countries. So I am grateful to have benefited from his policies, even if I don't agree with some of them."

– Ms Waheda Ahmet, 27, waitress



### WEAKENING HEALTH

"I completed this balloon sculpture on Sunday night and it said 'Get Well Soon' and it was meant for the good wishes area outside the hospital. I had to modify it this morning to 'With Love LKY'."

I have been volunteering with the grassroots here for over 20 years and witnessed his health deteriorating, which was heartbreaking."

– Madam Diana Lim, 56, freelance balloon sculptor (left)

### VISIONARY

"I read Mr Lee Kuan Yew's memoirs two years ago. When I put down the book, I knew I had to see this city. Fortunately, I got a posting here from my company."

What he achieved, from Third World to First in one generation, is amazing. You have an amazing country and are really lucky to have a man like Lee Kuan Yew. It shows that if you have a vision and the courage to make it a reality, you can change the destiny of a country."

– Mr Anthony Pain, 40, tax consultant from France who lives in Singapore



**TRIBUTES: A NATION GRIEVES**
*Mr Lee Kuan Yew*  
1923 - 2015

# NTUC hails a dear brother and true fighter for workers

It says Mr Lee's lasting legacy is his championing of spirit of tripartism

By **TOH YONG CHUAN**  
MANPOWER CORRESPONDENT

MR LEE Kuan Yew was a "dear brother" and "true fighter" for workers, the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) said in its tribute to Singapore's first Prime Minister yesterday.

Mr Lee's lasting legacy as Prime Minister was his championing of the strong spirit of tripartism, or the three-way partnership of the Government, unions and employers, it added.

"Because of his care and concern for the people, countless workers have benefited from fair treatment, higher wages and better conditions at the workplace," the NTUC said in a statement signed by its president, Ms Diana Chia, and secretary-general, Mr Lim Swee Say, a Cabinet minister.

"It is because of him that we, as a people, can lay claim to better jobs, better lives and brighter futures ahead."

The labour movement noted that Mr Lee's involvement with trade unionism can be traced to 1952, when he represented the Postal and Telecommunications Uniformed Staff Union in negotiating a settlement, after the union went on strike.

Mr Lee was then a 29-year-old lawyer who had returned to Singapore in 1950 and was working as a legal assistant in Laycock & Ong, a law firm near Raffles Place.

He got wage increases for the postal workers and went on to become the legal adviser to more than 100 unions and associations, building a reputation as a champion of workers and underdogs.

It laid the foundation of the People's Action Party's "symbiotic relationship" with non-communist unions.

"We had grown up in the unions; we had built up our political following working on and through workers' problems, fighting against unfair treatment and injustice," wrote Mr Lee of PAP's union roots in a May 2014 essay in PAP's Petir magazine.

Mr John De Payva, NTUC's longest-serving president from 1997 to 2011, said Mr Lee had always had a "personal interest in

the labour movement since the 1950s."

"The leadership of the labour movement supported his party to power," said Mr De Payva.

"That relationship was indelible."

Mr Lee received the NTUC's highest award - the Distinguished Comrade of Labour - in 1991. In the citation, NTUC credited him for his role in building a society with industrial peace, justice, social mobility and an equitable sharing of the fruits of labour.

Mr Lee was the first recipient of the award, which has since been given to only three other leaders: former labour chiefs Ong Teng Cheong (1994) and Lim Boon Heng (2007), and then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong (2001).

When the NTUC held its 50th anniversary in May 2011, Mr Lee was honoured as one of 50 key movers and shakers in the first 50 years of its history.

The last NTUC event he attended was a closed-door dinner in January 2012 to honour nine leaders who stepped down from its highest decision-making central committee for union leadership renewal.

One leader who had stepped down was Mr N. Silva, president of the Union of Security Employees, who recalled that Mr Lee thanked the unionists for their service and spoke to them about improving the lot of low-wage workers through NTUC's progressive wage model, which links pay increases to training.

"He always has a heart for workers, especially low-wage workers," said Mr Silva of Mr Lee.

The NTUC will hold a series of activities to mourn Mr Lee's death.

These include setting up counters at its Marina Boulevard headquarters where workers and members of the public can pen their condolence messages from today till Sunday.

Union leaders will observe one minute's silence at noon at the headquarters today. A memorial service later this week is being finalised.

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Visitors (above) continued to arrive and pay tribute to Mr Lee Kuan Yew yesterday evening at Singapore General Hospital Block 7, where a banner saying "We Remember with Gratitude, Mr Lee Kuan Yew 1923-2015" had been put up. Meanwhile, others (right) flocked to Parliament House to remember Singapore's founding Prime Minister. ST PHOTOS: MARK CHEONG, JAMIE KOH



## Ethnic, religious groups pay tribute to Mr Lee's role in building harmony

By **ZAKIR HUSSAIN**  
DEPUTY POLITICAL EDITOR

SINGAPORE'S main ethnic and religious communities yesterday paid tribute to Mr Lee Kuan Yew, with many highlighting his role in creating a harmonious multiracial and multi-religious society.

"Without the wisdom and far-sightedness of this chief architect of modern Singapore, Singaporeans would not be able to experience the peace and prosperity that they are enjoying today," said Singapore Federation of Chinese Clan Associations president Chua Tian Poh.

Malay/Muslim self-help group Mendaki recounted Mr Lee's foresight in mooted its formation in 1982 to tackle the problem of Malay underachievement in education openly and sensitively, and in ensuring financial support for the organisation.

"Our progress is made possible due to Mr Lee's vision and genuine concern for the community," Mendaki chief executive Tuminah Sapawi said in a statement.

The Association of Muslim Professionals also issued a statement, saying Mr Lee's passing will leave a gap in the political arena, "but more than that, in the hearts of Singaporeans".

The Singapore Indian Development Association (Sinda) said Mr Lee's foresight had allowed self-help groups like Sinda to uplift countless individuals over the years and contribute to the overall progress of Singapore.

Eurasian Association president Benett Theseira said of Mr Lee:

"He was a pragmatic person who was able to understand the challenges that minority groups faced and the value that their diversity could bring to Singapore. He led us to pledge ourselves as one united people, regardless of race, language or religion."

Religious groups also issued condolence messages for Mr Lee, with Singapore Buddhist Federation president Seck Kwang Phing saying that the community "fondly remembers his tireless effort in promoting and ensuring religious harmony and equal treatment to all religions, regardless of the size of congregation of each religion". Archbishop William Goh of the Catholic Church said: "As a nation, we have him to thank for everything we are proud to call Singapore."

The Islamic Religious Council of Singapore (Muis) said Mr Lee will always be remembered for his support for the formation of Muis and the Mosque Building Fund.

"Mr Lee's leadership contributed to the growth of our economy, progress in the field of education, and peace, stability and harmony. The Singaporean Muslim community, too, has grown and prospered in tandem with Singapore," it said.

Added the Young Sikh Association: "Despite being a minority within a minority, the Sikh community is an integral part of Singapore society simply because Mr Lee took great pains to ensure that all Singaporeans, regardless of race, language or religion, are equal partners in Singapore's growth and success."

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## Opposition pays tribute to man who 'sacrificed much for us all'

By **THAM YUEN-C**  
ASSISTANT POLITICAL EDITOR

POLITICAL party rivalry took a back seat yesterday as the Workers' Party sent its condolences to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong on the death of his father, Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

In a letter to PM Lee and his family, WP chief Low Thia Khiam said: "His passing marks the end of an era in Singapore's history. His contributions to Singapore will be remembered for generations to come."

The elder Mr Lee, who was a founding member of the People's Action Party, died yesterday at Singapore General Hospital where he had been under intensive care for severe pneumonia since Feb 5.

Tributes poured in soon after from opposition politicians, who acknowledged his sacrifices for Singapore even as they pointed out that not all agreed with his ways.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) secretary-general Benjamin Pwee said: "All great leaders are ultimately human, and much can

be said both good and bad about the man."

But at this time of national mourning, let's remember and celebrate the good he had done for us as Singaporeans, and give him the credit that is due. He had sacrificed much for what he had believed in, and to give us all a life."

Singapore Democratic Alliance chairman Desmond Lim Bak Chuan shared these views. He said that while Mr Lee's decisions had sometimes been criticised, they were made "to suit the needs of that time."

The National Solidarity Party, lamenting Mr Lee's death, said he "had contributed significantly to the growth and development of our country".

Others had words of comfort for PM Lee and his family.

The secretary-general of Singaporeans First Party, Mr Tan Jee Say, said "we join in the nation's grief over the loss of her most famous son".

He also asked PM Lee to take comfort in the knowledge that the elder Mr Lee had "re-united with" his wife Kwa Geok Choo,

who died in 2010.

Singapore Democratic Party's secretary-general Chee Soon Juan, in sending his party's "deepest condolences" to the Lee family, said: "In this time of personal grief, our thoughts are with you."

Reform Party chief Kenneth Jeyaretnam, son of the late opposition politician J.B. Jeyaretnam, said: "It is natural that Singaporeans will feel that a part of Singapore has died with him."

He added: "Rest in peace. My thoughts are with his family." Meanwhile, London-based political exile Tan Wah Pao said in a Facebook post that Mr Lee would be "remembered as an accomplished dictator who maintained a veneer of democracy".

Mr Tan also said that with Mr Lee's death, people would be free of the "fear of political persecution" that "crippled the citizens and residents in Singapore like no other country in the developed world to the extent that even the very rich, the very clever, and those in high political office shy away from expressing dissent".

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TRIBUTES: A NATION GRIEVES

# Economic prospects ‘still look bright’

Business community confident that S’pore on right track, says SBF chief

By MOK FEI FEI

WHILE the Singapore skyline has lost some of its shine in the wake of Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s death, the country’s economic prospects still look bright, noted business leaders and analysts yesterday.

Many companies, including CapitaLand, DBS Bank and UBS, have turned off their building signage as a mark of respect during the national period of mourning.

It is the business community’s way of honouring a man credited with Singapore’s economic miracle, right in the heart of the Central Business District.

“He was a far-sighted visionary who led Singapore on a strong path of growth, from a fishing village to an advanced city state,” said Singapore Business Federation (SBF) chairman Teo Siong Seng. “Despite Mr Lee’s passing, the business community is confident that Singapore is still on the right track with the economic restructuring.”

Analysts pointed out that in recent years, Mr Lee had played largely an advisory role and had not been actively involved in the policymaking decisions.

“Possibly, there may be some impact in the sense of sentiment in the short term, about what direction the Singapore economy may take in the longer term with the passing of an era,” noted OCBC Bank economist Selenia Ling.

“But the Cabinet and the Government have been in place for a while and it doesn’t strike me as

there being a big shift in the macroeconomic policies.”

Markets operated as usual yesterday, with the Singapore dollar strengthening against the Chinese yuan, the Japanese yen, the Malaysian ringgit and even the surging United States dollar in late Asian trading.

The Straits Times Index closed little changed, though trading activity was slightly more muted.

Ms Tan Min Lan, head of the Asia-Pacific investment office at UBS, noted that there could be some limited knee-jerk reaction in the Singapore equity and foreign exchange markets.

Observers said policies which

Mr Lee espoused and which played a part in the country’s success have been ingrained in the governing system.

Such policies, like having a strong rule of law, having zero tolerance for corruption, keeping a pro-business environment, building high-quality infrastructure and being an open, globalised economy, look set to continue.

“We have an established economic framework that has been planned and sustained over the years by three different prime ministers,” said Nominated MP and Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry president Thomas Chua. “Even we business-

men learn from (Mr Lee), to always look ahead and never rest on our laurels.”

In an important lesson for a generation of young people unaware of the nation’s past poverty is that they must not remain in the dark about Singapore’s vulnerability, said Associate Professor Tan Khue Glap of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

“We need to get the younger generation to understand that Singapore overcame a lot – such as a small economy, a lack of manpower – to pull through to where it is today. That cannot be taken for granted.”

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## 18 places for public to pay their respects

EIGHTEEN community sites are being set up for the public to pay their last respects to Mr Lee Kuan Yew. The first six are ready. The other 12 will be ready tomorrow. The sites will be open from 10am to 8pm until March 29. Residents can also visit the sites for a live telecast of the State Funeral on March 29.

1. **Tanjong Pagar Community Club**, 101 Cantonment Road, Singapore 089774
2. **Ang Mo Kio Central Stage @ Ang Mo Kio Town Centre**. The stage is between Block 712 and Block 709, Ang Mo Kio Avenue 8
3. **Open space @ Bedok Town Centre**, in front of 209 New Upper Changi Road, Singapore 460209. The space is outside the Sheng Siong supermarket
4. **Hardcourt opposite Choa Chu Kang MRT Station**, Singapore 680355
5. **Tampines Community Plaza**, 10 Tampines Central 1, Singapore 529536. This is in front of Tampines One Mall
6. **Canopy** (the Pavilion between JCube shopping centre and Jurong Regional Library), Jurong East Street 13
7. **Telok Ayer Hong Lim Green Community Centre** (Open Stage) at 20 Upper Pickering Street, Singapore 058284
8. **Toa Payoh Central Community Club**, 93 Toa Payoh Central, Singapore 319194
9. **Kovan Hub**, No. 206 Hougang Street 21, Singapore 530206. This is near the Heartland Mall
10. **Sengkang Community Hub hardcourt**, 2 Sengkang Square, Singapore 545025
11. **Marine Parade Promenade**, Block 87 Marine Parade Central, Singapore 440087. This is next to the McDonald’s outlet
12. **Hardcourt at Block 749 Yishun Street 72**, Singapore 760731
13. **Hardcourt at Petir Park**, Block 140 Petir Road Singapore 670140. This is near Petir LRT station
14. **Woodlands Civic Centre open space**, 900 South Woodlands Drive, Singapore 730900
15. **Block 442 and Block 449 Clementi Avenue 3 open area**. This is at the entrance of Clementi Town Centre estate
16. **People’s Association headquarters**, 9 King George’s Avenue, Singapore 208581
17. **Singapore Botanic Gardens’ Block 1**, 1 Cluny Road, Singapore 259569
18. **Marina Barrage**, 260 Marina Way, Singapore 018976

FOR hotline, online queries and tributes for Mr Lee:

- Go online to [www.rememberingleekuan-yew.sg](http://www.rememberingleekuan-yew.sg) and [www.facebook.com/rememberingleekuan-yew](http://www.facebook.com/rememberingleekuan-yew) to leave tributes for Mr Lee, or to find out more about the funeral, and Mr Lee’s life and contributions.
- Or call the official hotline at 6336 1160, or e-mail queries@mcgci.gov.sg if you have any queries.

## Mourning period

PRIME Minister Lee Hsien Loong has declared a seven-day period of national mourning, from yesterday to Sunday, to mark the death of Singapore’s founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

Here are major events during this period:

**Today, March 24:**  
■ Second day of a private family wake at Sri Temasek.  
■ The National University of Singapore (NUS) will hold a memorial ceremony for the school community at 2pm at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

**Tomorrow, March 25:**  
■ Mr Lee’s body will be transferred to Parliament House, where it will lie in state until Saturday for the public to pay their last respects. They can do so from 10am to 8pm daily during that time.

**Thursday, March 26:**  
■ Parliament will sit in a special session at 4pm to pay tribute to Mr Lee.  
■ The Singapore Buddhist Federation will organise a memorial service at 8pm at Kong Meng San Phor Kark See Monastery in Bright Hill Road.

**Friday, March 27:**  
■ Archbishop William Goh will celebrate a Catholic mass at St Joseph’s Church in Victoria Street at 1.15pm.

**Sunday, March 29:**  
■ Mr Lee’s body will be transported to NUS’ University Cultural Centre, where a state funeral service will be held at 2pm.

It will be attended by the late Mr Lee’s family, friends and staff; President Tony Tan Keng Yam; Cabinet ministers; Members of Parliament; and Mr Lee’s fellow founding members of the People’s Action Party.

Senior civil servants, grassroots leaders and Singaporeans from all walks of life will also be attending the service, which will be followed by a private cremation at Mandai Crematorium.

# Tributes pour in from corporate world

By WONG WEI HAN

TRIBUTES to Mr Lee Kuan Yew poured in from the business community yesterday as corporate leaders reflected on the elder statesman’s contribution in developing the nation into an international business hub.

Mr Lee engineered many of Singapore’s crowning achievements on the global stage, including the development of Changi Airport, which would not have existed without him, the airport said in a statement yesterday.

“Mr Lee took a personal interest in the development of the new airport at Changi. He flew over the site to oversee construction, ensuring that Changi Airport was to become a shining beacon of the Singapore brand in the global economy,” it stated.

The decision to move the international airport to Changi meant writing off the \$800 million invested in Paya Lebar and investing a fresh \$1.5 billion in the new development, but the bold move paid off, Changi Airport added.

Singapore Airlines (SIA) chief executive Goh Choon Phong reflected along similar lines: “His vision enabled Singapore to grow into a pre-eminent global air hub, and for SIA to prosper as a world-leading international airline.”

It was also through Mr Lee’s foresight that Singapore has developed strong business ties with China, said the Singapore Chinese Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCCI). “Mr Lee always showed utmost concern for the development of the Chinese community. He urged local Chinese businesses to develop close links internationally, let Singapore integrate into the global market place,” the SCCCI added yesterday.

UOB chairman emeritus Wee Cho Yaw said that in the early days of Singapore’s economic development, he had the opportunity to interact more with Mr Lee and would seek his advice, for example, when he led a delegation to China. Mr Wee said that “Lee Kuan Yew was for Singapore... That’s why Singapore can prosper-

ous and do so well.”

Mr Wee recalled another experience with Mr Lee.

Out of concern for the career prospects of Chinese-educated Singaporeans, Mr Lee had proposed the merger of Nanyang University – or Nantah – and the University of Singapore in the late 1970s.

Mr Wee, then chairman of Nantah, said his hands were tied: “Unfortunately, I told him I could not take the initiative because Nantah was built by the Chinese community. He understood my position. He was very understanding and was very patient with us.”

Even as Mr Lee eventually proceeded with the merger, he did so only with Singaporeans’ future in mind, Mr Wee added.

Others in the banking industry agreed that the nation would not have become one of Asia’s leading financial hubs without Mr Lee.

DBS chairman Peter Seah said: “As Prime Minister, (Mr Lee) and (Finance Minister) Goh Keng Swee were the architects of the Asian dollar market and set their sights on making Singapore a leading financial centre. Later on, in a somewhat controversial move, he pushed for consolidation of the Singapore banking sector. He believed that... for Singapore banks to make it in the face of rising competition globally, they needed to be big and strong. Today, all three Singapore banks are among the world’s strongest and safest.”

Companies flourished in the pro-business environment. Hong Leong Singapore executive chairman Kwok Leng Beng said: “Mr Lee played an instrumental role in nurturing corporate Singapore. The private sector and the business community benefited tremendously from his pro-business policies and vision to establish Singapore as a major business hub for Asia.”

This enabled many of Singapore’s home-grown conglomerates, like our group, to thrive locally and globally.”

ewhong@sph.com.sg



## CORE VALUES

“I was struck by his speech at the Business China’s first anniversary dinner in 2008. What he said then has guided me since.”

“He reminded us that we must not let down Singapore’s reputation for reliability and integrity. These core values that have shaped Singapore’s past have also influenced my behaviour.”

– Standard Chartered chief executive for Asian Lim Cheng Tekk

## SOLID FOUNDATION

“I was born in the ‘60s and I am two years older than Singapore. During the early formation years, all of us went through a period of hardship and turmoil.”

“Mr Lee Kuan Yew was able to forge a strong team of pioneer leaders and laid a solid foundation for meritocracy, equal opportunities for all, good education, public housing and healthcare. I was one of the beneficiaries of the system and managed to rise through the poverty gap to be where I am today.”

– StarHub CEO Tan Tong Hai

## IMMENSE CONTRIBUTION

“Mr Lee’s contribution to GIC has been immense. In the three decades that he was chairman, he guided GIC through many global and regional financial crises and saw to key milestones in its corporate development.”

“Despite his stature and busy schedule, Mr Lee always found time beyond board meetings to engage GIC. It was a privilege to have him in our midst.”

– GIC group president Lim Siong Guan

## VISIONARY POLICIES

“By boldly pursuing his visionary economic policies and focusing on good governance, he and his government turned a colonial outpost into one of the world’s most open and business-friendly economies.”

“Today, it is hard to conceive of modern Singapore absent the role he played. His passing is a tremendous loss, but Mr Lee’s life will continue to inspire us.”

– OCBC Bank chairman Ooi Sang Kuang and CEO Samuel Tsiem

## PURSUIT OF EXCELLENCE

“The Singapore story is known and respected globally and this nation is well placed to grow stronger and build on his legacy.”

“Today’s Singapore financial sector has its place on the world map largely due to the foundations he laid for our industry to flourish – a foundation underpinned by an unequivocal commitment to clean government, sound governance and a pursuit of excellence.”

– DBS Group CEO Piyush Gupta

## PROUD IDENTITY

“Under his leadership and guidance, Singaporeans built a truly proud national identity and sound, steady governance. He had been instrumental in transforming this country into one of the world’s most business-friendly and successful economies today, with a widely respected civil service and world-class infrastructure.”

– PSA International group chairman Fock Siew Wah

## STEWARDSHIP

“The eldest son of a Shell employee, Mr Lee had a longstanding relationship with Shell. He was instrumental in getting his government of the day to attract multinational companies like Shell to locate their Asian headquarters in Singapore.”

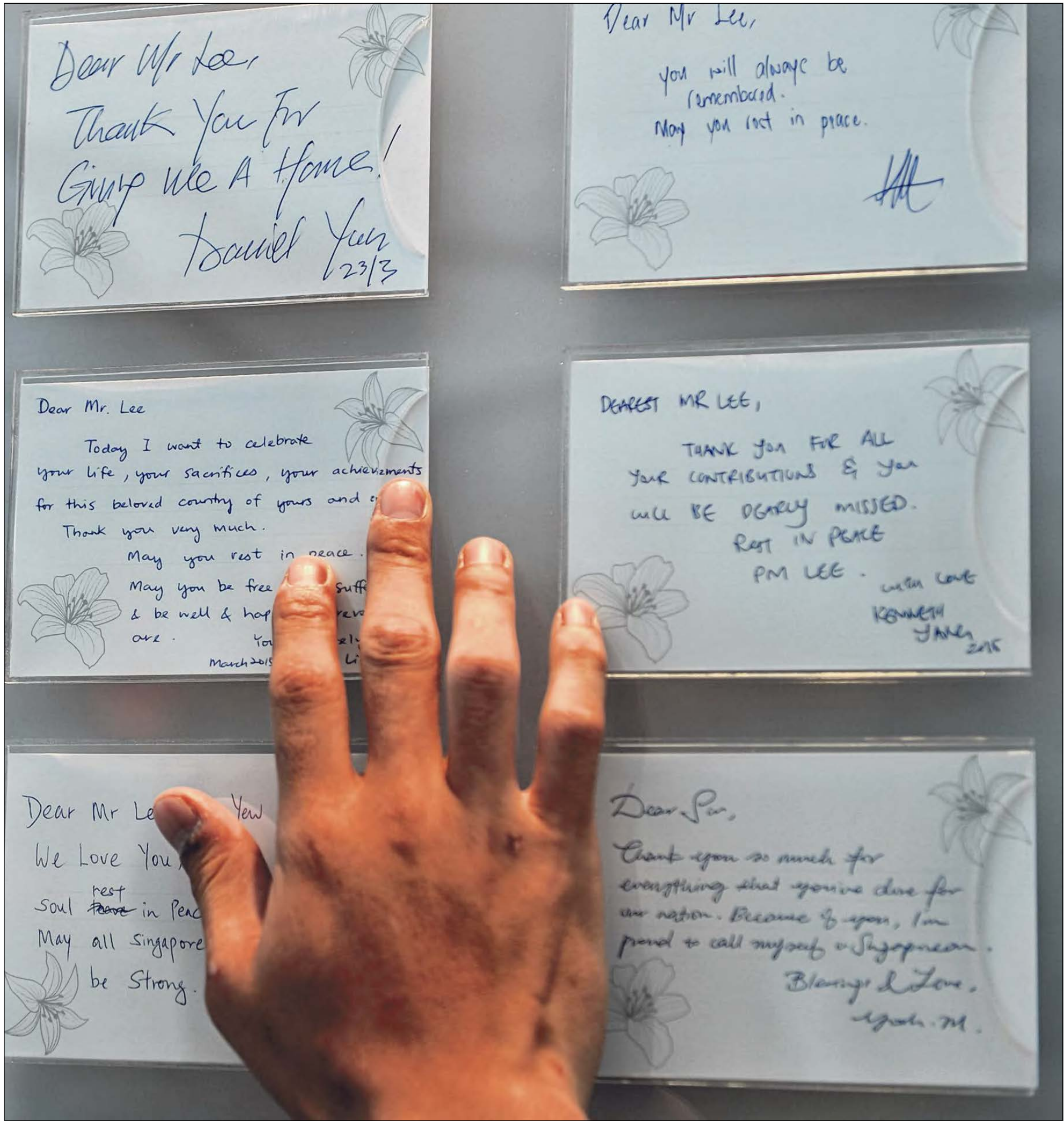
“Over the decades, Shell has benefited from his stewardship. We express our deepest condolences to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and his family.”

– Ms Goh Swee Chen, chairman of Shell Companies in Singapore

## SHAPED OUR DNA

“He has shaped our DNA so well that Singapore, Singaporeans and Singapore companies have become good brand names. Mr Lee has laid a strong foundation for the country.”

– President and Group CEO, CapitaLand, Lim Ming Yan



Messages left for former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew on display outside Parliament House yesterday. Many firms in the Central Business District, including CapitaLand, DBS Bank and UBS, have turned off their building signage as a mark of respect during the national period of mourning. ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA

# Long lines for ST special noon edition

DISTANCE was no obstacle for 76-year-old Gurden Singh, who wanted a copy of the 24-page The Straits Times Special Edition on the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

The retiree travelled from Ang Mo Kio to Dhoby Ghaut and City Hall yesterday in search of the 90-cent tabloid-size special.

Mr Singh, a former Supreme Court interpreter, ended up at Raffles Place where he joined a queue of hundreds that started at 10.30am.

They waited till just before noon, when the first 100 copies were delivered. Many snapped up both The Straits Times and Lianhe Zaobao editions.

Sales manager Robin Chan, 63, joined the queue at 10.45am. He heard of Mr Lee’s death from friends, adding: “He’s our hero.”

Marketing executive Khong Foong Ee, 45, said of the edition:

“This is something that you pass down to future generations.”

The Straits Times editor Warren Fernandez said: “We wanted to capture in words and pictures the many things that Mr Lee has done over the years for Singapore and Singaporeans, and this tabloid special was part of this effort.”

“There will be more special reports over the next few days, both in our print paper, as well as our digital platforms. It is our way of paying a fitting tribute to Singapore’s founding father.”

By 6pm, about 150,000 copies of the edition have been sold. It will continue to be sold at news-stands until copies run out.

All stories on Mr Lee can also be read in full and shared freely on The Straits Times digital platforms as the usual payroll has been lifted.

KOK XING HUI



A queue of hundreds started at 10.30am at Raffles Place for The Straits Times Special Edition on Mr Lee Kuan Yew. By 6pm, about 150,000 copies of the edition have been sold. ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI



## WORLD TRIBUTES

## RESPECT OF FILIPINOS

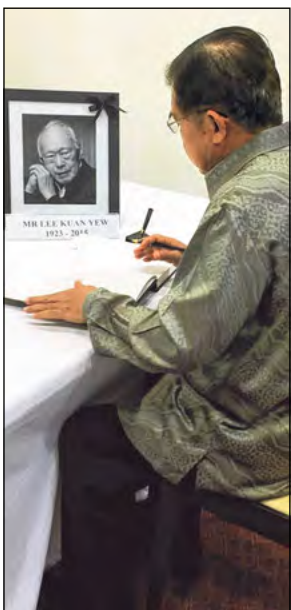
"An era has passed, one upon which Singaporeans can look back on with deep pride and a sense of accomplishment. Throughout his long life, as Prime Minister and Senior Minister, Mr Lee demonstrated an unwavering devotion to his country, turning it into a statement that would be an exemplar of efficient, modern and honest governance. The development of Singapore has earned it the respect of nations and peoples, including the tens of thousands of Filipinos who work there and visit the country."

— Mr Benigno Aquino, President of the Philippines

## DETERMINATION TO SUCCEED

"Lee Kuan Yew's courage, determination, commitment, character and ability made him a formidable leader who held the respect of Singaporeans and the international community alike. His loss will be deeply felt by his family and the people of Singapore. I had the honour of meeting Mr Lee in 2007 during his last official visit to New Zealand. He was well-known for his insights and foresight but what struck me most was his unwavering determination to see Singapore succeed."

— New Zealand Prime Minister John Key



## FIRM BELIEVER IN ASEAN

"He ranks among the most influential leaders of Asia, and in ASEAN as well. He gave an exceptional contribution to the progress of ASEAN, alongside other ASEAN leaders of the time."

— Mr Jusuf Kalla, Vice-President of Indonesia, seen here signing the condolence book at the Singapore Embassy in Jakarta

## A FRIEND TO BRITAIN

"He was always a friend to Britain, if sometimes a critical one, and many British prime ministers benefited from his wise advice, including me."

— British Prime Minister David Cameron

## BIG INFLUENCE IN ASIA

"There can be few examples in history of such an outstandingly successful nation created so completely by the vision, will and leadership of a single individual."

"But his achievement extended far beyond Singapore itself. He was a key architect of ASEAN, and through that made a central contribution to the emergence of South-east Asia as a model to the world of effective regional cooperation and integration. No one did more than Lee to make our nearer region as stable and harmonious as it is today."

"But perhaps even more importantly, Lee has left a profound impact on the wider Asian region through his remarkable influence on China. He understood, perhaps before anyone else outside China, and perhaps even before Deng Xiaoping himself, just what China could achieve if it found a way to harness market economics and an open trading and investment regime."

— Former prime minister of Australia Bob Hawke

# 'Lion among leaders' and 'inspiration' to Asians

Past and present leaders of nations, global organisations praise Mr Lee

By RAVI VELLOO  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

FROM Washington to Canberra, the world mourned the death of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, described as one of "the greatest leaders" of our times, a "lion among leaders" and an "inspiration" to Asians.

"Lee Kuan Yew was a legendary figure in Asia, widely respected for his strong leadership and statesmanship," United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon said in a statement, leading the reaction of world leaders.

"As Singapore marks its 50th anniversary of independence this year, its founding father will be remembered as one of the most inspiring Asian leaders."

Leaders in the world's most powerful nation also expressed grief at Mr Lee's death, with past and present US presidents George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton and Barack Obama issuing condolence notes.

"He was a true giant of history who will be remembered for generations to come as the father of modern Singapore and as one of the great strategists of Asian affairs," Mr Obama said in tribute, as he expressed resounding appreciation for the Singapore statesman whose voice continued to be heard long after he stepped down as Prime Minister in 1990.

"Our discussions during my trip to Singapore in 2009 were hugely important in helping me formulate our policy of rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific," he said.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank also joined in saluting the departed Singapore leader, who famously took his nation from Third World to First World during his lifetime.

"He was a visionary statesman whose uncompromising stand for meritocracy, efficiency and education transformed Singapore into one of the most prosperous nations in the world," IMF managing director Christine Lagarde said in Washington.

The World Bank praised Mr Lee for transforming Singapore.

"He tackled corruption relentlessly and held public servants to the highest standards," said the World Bank's chief executive officer, Mr Jim Yong Kim. "More importantly, he showed that economic development could provide opportunities and improve the lives of a country's citizens."

Mr Lee, who was the last surviving of the Asian titans who brought independence from European colonial rule to their nations, was also one of the five founding leaders of ASEAN, along with those from Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines.

Yesterday, South-east Asian leaders stood as one to express appreciation for a personality whose vision and diplomacy helped provide stability for a region that

emerged as a growth model for the world during his time.

Indonesian President Joko Widodo, whose nation is ASEAN's largest by area and economic size, described Mr Lee as a close friend of Indonesia and said he would travel to the Republic for Mr Lee's funeral.

"As a leader and a great statesman who loved his people, he was also one of the most influential politicians in Asia," Mr Joko told reporters in Tokyo, where he is on a bilateral visit.

In Malaysia, Prime Minister Najib Razak wrote on Facebook that "founding Prime Minister Mr Lee Kuan Yew's achievements were great, and his legacy is assured".

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the Johor Sultan's coronation later, he said Mr Lee had the ability to contribute concrete ideas in various fields.

Datuk Seri Najib said he did not think Mr Lee's death would impact bilateral ties because current Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong is committed to strengthening the bilateral relationship.

Thailand's royal family and leaders also sent their condolences yesterday. Prime Minister Prayut Chan-ocha will be in Singapore for Mr Lee's funeral on Sunday.

Much of the region's early prosperity is often linked to investments from Japan in the 1970s and 1980s.

Called the "flying geese model", this had Japan as lead goose, with newly industrialising South Korea, Taiwan and Singapore close behind, followed by the developing economies of Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia.

Yesterday, Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said Mr Lee, who is "revered all over the world", played a key role not only in achieving Singapore's remarkable economic growth and prosperity but also in securing the peace and stability of the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

Mr Lee was "one of the greatest leaders of modern times that Asia has ever produced", he said. In China and India, Asia's big tectonic plates where Mr Lee was familiar to every leader in the modern history, the tributes were fulsome as well.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said Mr Lee had been widely respected by the international community as a strategist and statesman and called him "founder, pioneer and promoter of China-Singapore relations".

In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the tributes to the Singaporean figure.

"A far-sighted statesman and a lion among leaders, Mr Lee Kuan Yew's life teaches valuable lessons to everyone," tweeted Mr Modi, who uses the social media site for most of his public pronouncements.

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(Top) The Sultan of Brunei, Hassanal Bolkiah, and his wife, Raja Isteri Pengiran Anak Hajah Saleha, paying their respects at the private wake in Sri Temasek yesterday. (Above) Hong Kong Chief Executive Leung Chun Ying (right) bowing in front of a portrait of Mr Lee at the Singapore Consulate in Hong Kong yesterday. PHOTOS: NEO XIAOBIN, REUTERS

## US presidents past and present laud friendship and advice

By JEREMY AU YONG  
U.S. BUREAU CHIEF  
IN WASHINGTON

RARELY has the passing of a leader of a small nation far away made such a splash here. But in a testament to Mr Lee Kuan Yew's extraordinary standing in the United States, news of his death was greeted by an outpouring of tributes from American leaders past and present.

President Barack Obama led the way, hailing Mr Lee as a "giant of history" and a statesman who influenced his administration's pivot to Asia.

He said in a statement he was "deeply saddened" and conveyed his condolences on behalf of the American people.

Recalling his visit to Singapore in 2009, he said his discussions with Mr Lee, who was Minister Mentor at the time, "were hugely important in helping me formulate our policy of rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific". "He was a true giant of history who will be remembered for generations to come as the father of modern Singapore and as one of the great strategists of Asian affairs."

Though the US President was among the first to pay tribute, by Sunday night in Washington, many of his predecessors had added their own panegyric in Mr Lee's memory.

Mr George H.W. Bush, who was president from 1989 to 1993, mourned the passing of a friend.

"Barbara and I, and indeed the

entire Bush family, extend our heartfelt condolences to Prime Minister Lee's family and countrymen. I will always be proud that Lee Kuan Yew was my friend," he said.

Mr Bill Clinton (1993-2001) and Mr George W. Bush (2001-2009) separately paid tribute to Mr Lee's wisdom as well as his work in building up Singapore and the bilateral relationship with the US.

"After leaving office, he continued to offer brilliant analysis and wise advice to those who sought it. We will always be grateful for our fascinating conversations with him over the years. Our thoughts are with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, his entire family, and all the people of Singapore," Mr Clinton said in a joint

statement with his wife and former secretary of state Hillary Clinton.

The younger Bush, in a tribute on Facebook, said: "The Singapore he leaves behind is an influential force for stability and prosperity and a friend to the United States."

Mr Lee is known to have consulted a long line of American presidents, including the late Richard Nixon (1969-1974), with most seeking clear-headed advice about China.

While Mr Lee was an early proponent of the rise of China, he also believed in the long-term success of America due to the nation's dynamism and ability to innovate.

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Additional reporting by Melissa Sim

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015



# Grief and gratitude as leaders laud Mr Lee's legacy

His role in China's reform will be recorded in history, says Premier Li

By KOR KIAN BENG  
IN BEIJING  
and NIRMALA GANAPATHY  
IN NEW DELHI

ASIA'S dominant powers reacted with sorrow at Mr Lee Kuan Yew's death, praising his achievements and global vision, while at least one foreign state legislature passed a condolence resolution to mourn his passing.

An outpouring of grief and gratitude flowed in China, with President Xi Jinping calling Mr Lee an "old friend of the Chinese people".

Chinese Premier Li Keqiang, National People's Congress Chief Zhang Dejiang, Executive Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli and Foreign Minister Wang Yi also sent condolences to their Singapore counterparts Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, Speaker of Parliament Halimah Yacob, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean and Foreign Minister K. Shanmugam.

Mr Li said Mr Lee's "contributions towards Sino-Singapore ties and China's reform and opening up will surely be recorded in history".

Chinese nationals were among the dozens of people who rushed to sign the condolence books at the Singapore Embassy in Beijing.

Chinese media outlets were awash with obituaries hailing Mr Lee as one of the world's best ethnic Chinese leaders, listing his achievements and how he contributed to China's development.

The NetEase media portal ran a photo spread on Mr Lee's 33 visits to China over 37 years.

On his first trip there in 1976, he met Chairman Mao Zedong. He was the only Singapore leader who met all five top leaders of China - from Mao and Deng Xiaoping, to former presidents Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao, to Mr Xi.

In India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi led tributes to a statesman who nurtured India-Singapore ties. "A far-sighted statesman and a lion among leaders, Mr Lee Kuan Yew's life teaches valuable lessons to everyone. News of his demise is saddening," tweeted Mr Modi, known to be an admirer of Mr Lee and Singapore's model of development.

Indian President Pranab Mukherjee called Mr Lee a "towering leader" whose loss would be mourned in Asia.

In a condolence message, Congress president Sonia Gandhi highlighted the "warm" ties Mr Lee had with the Congress party and recalled him delivering the Jawaharlal Nehru Memorial Lecture in New Delhi in 2005.

Describing Mr Lee as the "builder of modern multi-ethnic Singapore", Mrs Gandhi said he belonged to the league of Asian leaders who successfully carried forward the task of nation-building.

In the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, where Singapore is helping to build a capital city, the state assembly passed a con-

dolence resolution and observed two minutes of silence for Mr Lee, who visited India six times as Prime Minister of Singapore.

Said Andhra Pradesh chief minister Chandrababu Naidu in a separate condolence message: "The world will be poorer by the passing away of a visionary leader who created 'an oasis of First World amidst Third World' with his pragmatic outlook and hard work."

He tweeted that he was deeply grieved by the death of Mr Lee, whose "inventive, forward-looking approach inspires global leaders".

As with China, Mr Lee had known the Indian leaders across generations, starting with first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru.

In the 2005 lecture, Mr Lee described how he shared "intellectual and emotional roots" with Nehru, because he too had "experienced subjugation and discrimination under the British Raj".

In Japan, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who met Mr Lee last year, described him as "a man of incomparable leadership and unparalleled insights... one of the greatest leaders of modern times that Asia has ever produced".

South Korean President Park Geun Hye announced she would travel to Singapore for Mr Lee's funeral. They first met when he made an official visit to South Korea in 1979 and had a meeting with her father and then President Park Chung Hee. Ms Park acted as interpreter at the meeting, which cemented bilateral ties.

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Additional reporting by Chang May Choon

## Mr Lee crafted a modern island republic as his legacy, says Najib

By SHANNON TEOH  
MALAYSIA CORRESPONDENT  
IN KUALA LUMPUR

MALAYSIANS reacted with grief at the passing of the man who led their closest neighbour for more than three decades, with Prime Minister Najib Razak saying the founding father of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew crafted a modern island republic as his legacy.

Relations between the two neighbours were often testy as Mr Lee clashed with his Malaysian counterparts such as Tunku Abdul Rahman, who spearheaded Malaysia's independence movement, and especially Tun Mahathir Mohamad, who led Malaysia from 1981 to 2003 in fierce competition with Singapore.

But the rivalry has not diluted the regard Malaysians have for Mr Lee, and practically every online news site reported on his death

and Datuk Seri Najib's declaration that "his achievements were great, and his legacy is assured".

"I pay tribute to Mr Lee Kuan Yew's determination in developing Singapore from a new nation to the modern and dynamic city we see today," he said of the man who governed Singapore for more than three decades until 1990.

Youth and Sports Minister Khairy Jamaluddin, who also leads the youth wing of Mr Najib's ruling Umno party, echoed the sentiment by calling Singapore "a tremendous legacy" of the late Mr Lee.

Other party leaders expressed their condolences, including Democratic Action Party (DAP) supreme Lim Kit Siang, who called it the "passing of an era".

Informed opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim's Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) noted Mr Lee's "developmental policies that were transparent and efficient, and were suc-

cessful in attracting foreign investors to the point that his country was dubbed the Switzerland of Asia".

"We must take stock of his efforts in administering Singapore, which focused on the welfare of the people regardless of race or religion," PKR president Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said in a statement.

Some like former law minister Zaid Ibrahim expressed misgivings about some of Mr Lee's methods, saying he "was harsh to those who opposed him", but acknowledged his "resolute commitment to integrity in government".

Former New Straits Times Press chief editor Kadir Jasin wrote in his blog that "strongman naturally comes to mind" when thinking about Mr Lee, but of the "many strongmen of Lee's generation... none could quite match his achievements".

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## 'Deep sorrow for loss of Indonesia's close friend'

By ZUBAIDAH NAZEER  
INDONESIA BUREAU CHIEF  
IN JAKARTA

SOUTH-EAST Asia's dominant nation mourned the death of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, a co-founder of ASEAN whose good ties with Indonesia's second President, Mr Suharto, set the stage for a bilateral relationship that helped stabilise the region.

Leaders across the Indonesian archipelago and from other ASEAN nations paid tribute to the man they called the founding father of Singapore and credited him with playing a crucial role in realising and shaping the regional grouping that started with five members and which doubled to 10.

President Joko Widodo, who is currently making a bilateral visit to Japan, followed by China, said he would travel to Singapore for Mr Lee's funeral on Sunday. He expressed his "deep sorrow" in a statement on behalf of the Indonesian government and people.

"The late former Prime Minister is a close friend of Indonesia, and known as the founding father

of modern Singapore. As a leader and a great statesman who loved his people, he was also one of the most influential politicians in Asia," Mr Joko said, reading a statement to reporters.

"Under his leadership, Singapore successfully transformed into an modern economic hub in Asia, putting it on a par with other developed nations."

In Jakarta, Vice-President Jusuf Kalla told The Straits Times of his past meetings with Mr Lee, whom he described as having made "an outstanding contribution to Singapore".

"He ranks among the most influential leaders of Asia, and in ASEAN as well. He gave an exceptional contribution to the progress of ASEAN, alongside other ASEAN leaders of the time," Mr Jusuf said after he signed a condolence book at the Singapore Embassy yesterday.

Mr Sofyan Wamandi, a prominent Indonesian business leader and the President's economic adviser who had met Mr Lee over dinner and also personally on other occasions, highlighted Mr Lee's

crucial role in ASEAN and in Indonesia-Singapore relations.

"Mr Lee Kuan Yew is not only a leader for Singapore, but also for ASEAN. LKY was a Singaporean who knew Indonesia the best," he said, referring to Mr Lee by his initials.

Mr Sofyan said the Singaporean leader placed a high level of commitment to cooperation with Indonesia and considered that the stability of Indonesia, South-east Asia's largest economy, was pivotal for a prosperous ASEAN. He credited the success of Batam as an industrial zone to Mr Lee's ideas and support.

"If anything happened region-wide, Mr Lee always took Indonesia as a priority. He was of the opinion that if Indonesia was not stable, then ASEAN wouldn't be stable," he added.

Mr Sofyan recalled that before Mr Lee's health began to fail, he would visit Indonesia to meet business, religious and political leaders, as well as hold informal discussions with then President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

"What's important for Indonesia

is that LKY helped to set a direction of good relationships between Singapore and Indonesia. He gave guidance to young leaders in Singapore to follow in his footsteps," he said.

Prime Minister Najib Razak of Malaysia, which took over as ASEAN chair last November, also acknowledged Mr Lee's contribution to the regional grouping, which he co-founded in 1967.

A tribute posted on the ASEAN Facebook page began: "Today, ASEAN lost one of its greatest leaders."

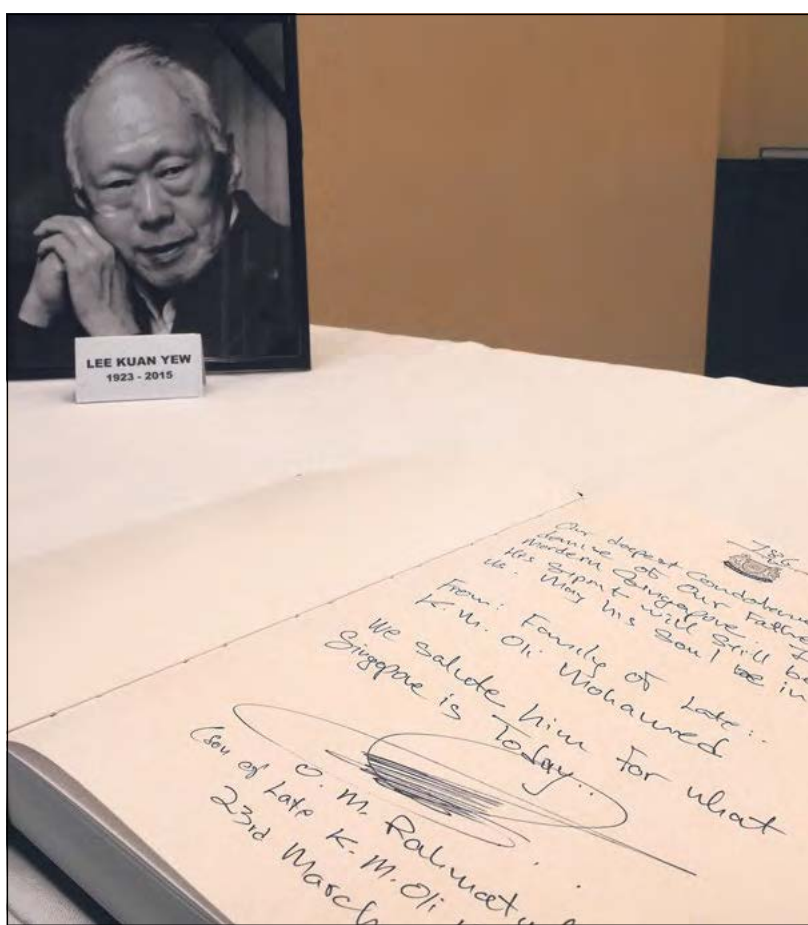
It added: "The country's transformation from a sleepy port town 50 years ago to now one of the wealthiest countries in the world is widely attributed to his astute leadership and effective governance."

The Singapore Embassy in Jakarta saw a steady stream of visitors, who left messages in the condolence book. Among them was the Governor of Jakarta, Mr Basuki Tjahaja Purnama.

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Additional reporting by Wahyudi Soeriaatmadja



People arriving at the Singapore Consulate in Shanghai to pay their respects to Mr Lee Kuan Yew yesterday. Dozens of people also rushed to sign the condolence books at the Singapore Embassy in Beijing. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



A portrait of former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew is placed next to a condolence book at the Singapore High Commission in Kuala Lumpur. Malaysian leaders have expressed their condolences over Mr Lee's death. PHOTO: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE



## WORLD TRIBUTES

# In Mr Lee's later years, the world turned to him as seer and sage

His insights led him to be regarded as the man who helped make history

By RAVI VELLOR  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

PERHAPS this article should begin with Henry Kissinger, the guru of realpolitik who was secretary of state to United States president Richard Nixon and shared a long association with Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Perhaps with the words of another lifelong friend of Mr Lee's, former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt, or Britain's Margaret Thatcher. Maybe even India's Sonia Gandhi, whose famous mother-in-law, the late Indira Gandhi, had a sometimes testy association with Singapore's founding father.

But that would be all too predictable.

So let's start with what an African American cabby in a city not known to have a particularly deep interest in the wider world had to say about Mr Lee.

It was 1998 and, visiting New York, I was in a yellow top from my hotel near Central Park to catch up with friends at a micro-brewery pub off Times Square. The driver was an emigre from Nigeria and, as in the manner of cabbies everywhere, curious to know more about his ride.

When he heard I lived in Singapore, he chuckled loudly.

"Hey, you are the guys who caned the American kid," he said. "You stood up to President Clinton and you did damn right. Who's that old man who runs your country - Lee?"

He was referring to Singapore's punishment, in 1994, of teenager Michael Fay for vandalism. After then President Bill Clinton intervened, Fay's caning was reduced from six strokes to four.

Singapore's decision to go ahead with the punishment made headlines around the world. Annoyed at the island's steadfastness, Washington voted against plans to hold the inaugural meeting of the World Trade Organisation in Singapore.

Fortunately, diplomacy and good sense prevailed. The inaugural summit, held in late 1996 at Suntec City, went through smoothly, highlighting Singapore as the world's pre-eminent trade-driven economy.

In many ways, the Fay incident and how it was received abroad underscores the world's perception of Mr Lee and the foundations on which he built Singapore.

Intellect and integrity, common sense above compassion, inclusiveness in domestic and foreign policy, a practical, non-ideological approach to issues, an unwavering commitment to globalisation and free markets, and a firm determination to enforce the rule of law - these are the qualities the world came to recognise in Mr Lee, and today, Singapore.

Some years later, when I was posted to India as the South Asia bureau chief for this newspaper, I would become aware that the world viewed Mr Lee's Singapore as more than an efficiently administered state - that it also stood for a healthy, throbbing habitat.

Outside a golf course in Greater Noida, a boom town in the notoriously poorly run state of Uttar Pradesh, I would frequently pass a billboard advertising a new, tree-lined condominium complex with plenty of water bodies. The promise was "Singapore-style living".

Without question, the reputation of an irascible, combative, Western lackey preceded the halcyon image of the sage and seer Mr Lee bore in his later years.

In the post-colonial era and its emphasis on non-alignment and suspicion of Western multinationals, his hard-nosed, contrarian approach and his open welcome of foreign investment evoked much disdain. "Lee is like a banana - yellow of skin, white underneath," then Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai complained at the Bandung Conference in 1955, echoing the Chinese view of the time.

A quarter-century later, of Chinese leadership would instruct rising party figures to travel to the island to study its growth and governance model.

In 2012, no less than President Xi Jinping ordered China Central Television to produce a series on Singapore.

From the mid-1970s, global companies such as Silicon Valley legend Hewlett-Packard, Seagate, DuPont and Sony would arrive in droves on an island with few resources except having a good location in South-east Asia and a clean, efficient government run by Mr Lee. The jobs they provided and the technology they brought elevated Singapore to new heights.

- Which was precisely why Mr Lee had invited them.

In 1999, Mr Lew Platt, retiring as chairman and chief executive of Hewlett-Packard, made a farewell visit to Singapore with his

successor Carly Fiorina. As always, they used the opportunity to touch base with the leadership here and exchange ideas. "He is a mensch," Mr Platt told me later of Mr Lee, using the Yiddish word for a wise man who radiates fortitude and firmness of purpose.

The fortitude, which rose from deep conviction, came with a price on occasion. Mr Lee, it was well-known, was prone to hectoring his interlocutors, especially when he believed they were under-performing in their potential, either as individuals or as leaders.

The Malaysians, particularly, did not take it well and it continues to rankle with the old guard. Several years ago, in a blog posting, former Prime Minister Mahatir Mohamad called Mr Lee a "little emperor... who likes to lecture us on how Malaysia should be run".

Mr Maurice Baker, one of Singapore's first-generation diplomats, once told me of a time he had arranged a visit to Singapore by then Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Musa Hitam, at a time of particularly prickly ties.

Mr Baker, then High Commissioner to Malaysia, had sent word ahead that Mr Lee must be careful to hold himself back and give Mr Musa a good hearing. "Musa came back fuming," Mr Baker recalled. "Rather than listen, LKY had given him a long lecture."

Another person he rubbed the wrong way was Mrs Indira Gandhi, the Indian prime minister who was so powerful in her time that some worshipped her as the incarnation of the demon-slaying Hindu goddess Durga.

In the early 1980s, on the sidelines of a multilateral meeting in New Delhi, Mr Lee, who had a long association with the Nehru-Gandhi family, is said to have pressed Mrs Gandhi to roll back her socialist policies. He thought India was best served by building a free-market economy that would propel the country to the heights he thought it could achieve. Mrs Gandhi is said to have responded frostily, causing a slight chill in an old friendship.

In later years, Mr Lee, watching China's rise and frustrated by the slow-footedness of the South Asian giant in catching up, was often publicly critical of India's tedious democracy, massive bureaucracy and litigious society that he thought held back the country.

Years later, a successor Congress government would set in motion policies that would open India's economy, spur growth and place it on the world stage as an emerging power. And in 2005, the

Indian government would honour Mr Lee by asking him to deliver the Nehru Memorial Lecture where he announced that he had revised his view of India.

Speaking at the function, Congress party chief Sonia Gandhi turned to him and said: "Mr Lee, we in India have listened to you with great respect - even when you were critical of us."

Little surprise that when her son Rahul, seen as a potential prime minister himself, decided to enter politics, he came to Mr Lee for advice. Some say his decision to bide his time while building the Congress organisation from the grassroots up is based on advice from Mr Lee.

By the turn of the century, Mr Lee's reputation as a clear-headed visionary had encompassed the globe. From Mr Nixon to Mrs Thatcher and the two Bushes who occupied the White House, all had turned to him as a trusted resource on the great changes in Asia, particularly China. It was perhaps his measured analysis and deep insights that helped the Western world accept the rise of China without feeling undue unease or a need to block it.

At a White House meeting in October 2009, President Barack Obama hailed Mr Lee as "one of the legendary figures of Asia in the 20th and 21st centuries".

Perhaps most satisfying for Mr Lee would be that he lived to see the Western media's sniping at him, and Singapore, turn to grudging respect, even admiration.

Singapore's tough position on long hair, chewing gum and its "fine city" reputation gave plenty of grist to the mills of the global media. As recently as August 2002, New York Times columnist William Safire, criticising Bloomberg News for settling a libel lawsuit brought by Mr Lee, sniped that Singapore was "an island I cannot visit because I like to chew gum and don't want to risk a caning for it".

But that would change, particularly as Mr Lee stepped down at the height of his power, signalling to the world his belief in planned transitions.

In December 2005, Time Magazine Asia, after interviewing him for more than five hours, put him on the cover as "the man who saw it all".

"Everybody who lives in Asia today thinks they are watching history being made," the Time editors wrote. "Lee Kuan Yew is one of those who can say, without fear of contradiction, that he helped make it."

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## Embodiment of a new Asian dynamism

LEE Kuan Yew, the founder and patriarch of modern Singapore who has died at the age of 91, was one of post-war Asia's most revered and controversial politicians and one of its last remaining independence leaders.

His greatest achievement was to promote the concept of good governance in South-east Asia, a region long plagued by corrupt, inefficient governments.

As Singapore's prime minister for more than 30 years, he built his small island republic into one of the world's economic success stories. Singapore is one of Asia's largest financial centres, and is the world's biggest ship bunkering port.

Mr Lee was the embodiment of a new Asian dynamism: Smart, tough and pragmatic and displaying unshakeable self-confidence.

His style of leadership had many foreign admirers and he was credited with being a pioneer of "authoritarian capitalism", which has influenced other countries including China, Russia and the Gulf states.

Richard Nixon once described him as a big man on a small stage who, "in other times and other places, might have attained the world stature of a Churchill, a Disraeli or a Gladstone".

Perhaps at times Mr Lee yearned to put his talents to work outside the narrow confines of Singapore, but he was pleased to be acknowledged as a leading spokesman for Asia.

Other leaders have stamped their personalities so firmly on a country.

His perfectionism, farsightedness, elitism, authoritarianism and intolerance, along with his obsessions with security, cleanliness

and order, are reflected in nearly every aspect of modern Singaporean life.

The sale of chewing gum is still banned - a nannyish rule he instigated that is arguably the most-recognised fact about Singapore abroad.

"What is required is a rugged, resolute, highly trained, highly disciplined community," he once said, believing that Singapore's multi-ethnic population and the political instability of South-east Asia represented a constant threat to his creation.

He achieved his goal at the expense of curbing some civil liberties, such as freedom of the press. He was unapologetic about his means, dismissing the idea of western liberal democracy as unsuitable to Asian societies.

His death comes as the city-state, whose economic and political model he oversaw, has reached a crossroads.

Singapore is straining to cope with a declining working-age population, increasing reliance on foreign immigrants and unprecedented popular pressure for a less authoritarian government.

Mr Lee, who had been physically frail, but mentally sharp in recent years, relinquished any official government role after an election in 2011 in which the ruling People's Action party suffered its worst result.

But he felt sufficiently alarmed at his country's declining birth rate to issue an appeal the following year, carried on the front page of The Straits Times, calling for Singaporeans to reproduce.

Otherwise, "this place will fold up", he said in his typically brusque manner.

FINANCIAL TIMES

## Global media on Mr Lee's legacy

### CREATOR OF ECONOMIC MIRACLE

WHEN historians chronicle Asia's modern resurgence, they will focus on the rise of the region's biggest economies: China, Japan, India. But if there's such a thing as "Asian capitalism", its spark, smartest proponent and most controversial symbol was the founder of the region's smallest country: Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew.

Few would dispute that what Lee achieved in his city-state was an economic miracle. This success, together with his clarity of purpose and outsized personality, influenced the course of Asia's giants.

Between 1960 and 2011, Singapore's per capita gross domestic product surged more than 100-fold. It now tops US\$55,000. The city stands as one of the most advanced economies on Earth, a preternaturally clean and green oasis famed for strong institutions and wide-open markets in a region still burdened by graft, cronyism and snarled bureaucracies.

Lee's great insight was to recognise that Singapore, after being kicked out of the Malaysian Federation in 1965, needed to look beyond its then-hostile neighbourhood and export higher-end goods to the advanced economies of the West and Japan. Along with the other so-called Asian Tigers, Singapore concentrated on getting the economic fundamentals right - encouraging savings and investment, keeping inflation and taxes low and currencies stable, and emphasising high-quality education.

This has since become accepted wisdom. Yet Lee chose this path at a time when Communist movements retained a powerful appeal across Asia. (One of his first acts was to harshly suppress Singapore's own leftists, with whom he'd once allied.) China remained in the throes of Mao's mad experiments, while Nehruvian India was busy repressing enterprise and shutting itself off from trade. Lee saw his choice not as a matter of ideology - he loved to say that the only test of an idea

During his years in power, and even after he stepped down from national leadership, global media often had a difficult relationship with Lee Kuan Yew. In his death, though, the praise came pouring out.

was its applicability - but of simple pragmatism.

Deng Xiaoping, a great admirer of Lee's, would adopt a similar attitude when launching his market reforms in China. If for nothing else, Lee should be celebrated for helping to inspire Deng's revolution, which lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty and constituted one of the greatest expansions of economic liberty in human history.

BLOOMBERG VIEW

### CLEAR-EYED GEOSTRATEGIST

IF YOU seek his monument, look around Singapore. Prosperous, orderly, clean, efficient and honestly governed, it is not the work of Lee Kuan Yew alone. But even his severest critics would agree that Mr Lee... played an enormous part.

Under him, Singapore, with no natural resources, has become one of the world's richest countries. Many admirers look to it as a model, and Mr Lee as a sage. He did indeed have much to teach the world; but some, especially in China, draw the wrong lesson: that authoritarianism works.

Part of Mr Lee's influence stemmed from his role as a clear-eyed, blunt-speaking strategist. He was an astute observer of the defining contest of our era - China's emergence and how America reacts to it.

He was also a respected interpreter of each to the other, and an important voice, with unique access in both countries, arguing for continued American engagement in Asia and for Chinese tolerance

THE ECONOMIST

### PRAGMATIC APPROACH WORKS

THE nation reflected the man: efficient, unsentimental, incorrupt,

inventive, forward-looking and pragmatic. "We are ideology-free," Lee said in an interview with The New York Times in 2007, stating what had become, in effect, Singapore's ideology.

"Does it work? If it works, let's try it. If it's fine, let's continue it. If it doesn't work, toss it out, try another one." The formula succeeded, and Singapore became an international business and financial centre admired for its efficiency and low level of corruption.

THE NEW YORK TIMES

### GREAT SUCCESS STORY

LEE saw moral failings in the liberal democracy of the West, and believed that "good government" and economic advancement were a more important national goal than individual liberties. He considered "so-called human rights" largely irrelevant to the growth of developing Asian nations.

Once asked whether Singapore - a country with so many restrictions that even chewing gum was barred - would slowly become more liberal, he replied: "You mean more like a Western society, like Britain or America?"

I hope never. I think we'd go down the drain. We'd have more poor people in the streets, sleeping in the open, we'd have more drugs, more crime, more single mothers and delinquent children, a troubled society and a poor economy."

Although often reprimanded by human rights activists, Lee remained a close friend of the United States throughout his political career.

Even his harshest critics agreed on one point: The Singapore he built is one of Asia's great success stories, with one of the world's most efficient airports and ports.

LOS ANGELES TIMES

### AN ENGLISHMAN AT HEART?

HE BELIEVED in the rule of law, though he used it as a blunt instrument in merciless pursuit of his suspected enemies. His authoritarian instincts were mitigated by intellectual rigour, paton incorruptibility and a modest lifestyle.

At the end of the working day in the Istana, his official quarters, he returned to his plain family home nearby; he ate sparingly, rarely drank anything stronger than tea, and allowed himself no distractions except golf. He was said at one time to be the best golfer among the world's leaders, though as Lyon Johnson remarked in a banquet speech, "that's a pretty small league".

Lee often expressed contempt for the decline of Western moral fibre, yet he retained a fondness for the British way of life and an admiration for the colonialists of earlier generations, including Singapore's founder, Sir Stamford Raffles. After one diatribe by Lee on the rotten state of modern England at a garden party in honour of the visiting foreign secretary, George Brown, in the late 1960s, Brown replied: "Harry, you're the finest Englishman east of Suez", leaving Lee momentarily lost for words.

THE TELEGRAPH

### HE'S SEEN IT ALL

LEE's life traced a long arc of modern East Asian history: the last vestiges of colonialism; the advent of affluence; the introduction of democracy, albeit flawed and limited; the spread of globalisation; the decline of Japan and the rise of China; and now the retreat to nationalism.

He was not so much an architect of change... as an observer of the way of the world, on anything from nation-building to geopolitics to terrorism, and everything in between. Over six decades of public life, Lee preached, berated, pontificated and counselled his own people, but also those of other countries, whether the advice was solicited or not.

TIME MAGAZINE



(Clockwise from top) Singaporeans paying their respects after signing a condolence book dedicated to Mr Lee Kuan Yew, at the Embassy of Singapore in Bangkok yesterday.

At a private family wake for Singapore's founding father held at Sri Temasek, Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka Shing (centre) arrives with sons Victor and Richard (behind Victor) at Sri Temasek to pay their respects. With them is PM Lee Hsien Loong's wife Ho Ching.

South Korea's Foreign Minister Yun Byung Se writes a message of condolence at the Singapore Embassy in Seoul. South Korean President Park Geun Hye has expressed her deep sorrow over the death of Singapore's first prime minister, one of the towering figures of post-colonial Asian politics.

Industrialist Washington SyCip signs a condolence book at the Singapore Embassy in the Philippines. Mr SyCip had met Mr Lee Kuan Yew several times, and is a close friend of the Lee family and Singapore President Tony Tan Keng Yam. He said Mr Lee's "loss is not only to Singapore, but to all of us who admired what he was able to do, with Asian values".

PHOTOS: REUTERS, AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE  
ST PHOTOS: NEO XIAOBIN, RAUL DANCEL



Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015





## FOUNDING FATHER

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015

OCT 12, 1976: Mr. Othman Wok being sworn in as a Cabinet minister. He was Social Affairs Minister from 1963 to 1977 and ambassador to Indonesia from 1977.



## THE LEE KUAN YEW I REMEMBER

Othman Wok, 90, served in Cabinet as Social Affairs Minister from 1963 to 1977

## Trusted friend and political comrade

MY FRIENDSHIP with Lee Kuan Yew began in 1952. He agreed to represent postal workers pro bono in their strike negotiations with the colonial government. One day, he arrived at the offices of the Malay daily, Utusan Melayu, where I was chief reporter, to provide updates about concessions he had secured on behalf of the workers.

What struck me was his willingness to fight for them, most of whom were Malays and Indians. This is a good man, I remember thinking to myself. His multiracial outlook coincided with mine.

I came to trust Kuan Yew and to respect him as a friend and a political comrade. His firm non-communal, non-communist stance drew my deep admiration. I believed in his cause and was prepared to stand with and fight alongside him.

It was this loyalty to him that exposed me to accusations within the

radical segments of the Malay community that I "sold my soul to the Chinese".

In 1964, Umno secretary-general Syed Jaafar Albar arrived in Singapore from Kuala Lumpur to whip up communist emotions among the Malays here. He urged Malays to unite against Kuan Yew. The crowd cheered his calls, shouting: "Kill LKY! Kill Othman Wok!"

We eventually learnt that the riots that year during the procession to mark Prophet Muhammad's birthday were a premeditated attempt to cause

trouble in Singapore.

My friends from Utusan Melayu in Kuala Lumpur later said they were informed ahead of time that there would be a riot in Singapore that day. It was not spontaneous. It was planned by radical Malay leaders who came from north of the Causeway.

Faced with a difficult dilemma, Kuan Yew stayed true to his multiracial principles. He did his best to push for his vision of a Malaysian Malaysia. When it was clear that then Malaysian PM Tunku Abdul Rahman would have none of it, Separation

became inevitable.

On the day the Separation document had to be signed in Kuala Lumpur, Kuan Yew took me aside and asked: "If I sign this Separation agreement, would you sign?"

I was the only Malay Cabinet minister at the time, and Kuan Yew was worried I would oppose it. I assured him I would sign.

I told him my concerns were about how we were going to cope with the communist threat in an independent Singapore. He said to me: "You don't worry. I will handle them."

He made good on this promise, dealing firmly and deftly with the communists after Independence. Some have expressed disagreement with Kuan Yew on his subsequent actions, since many of those detained continued to insist for many years that they were not communists.

This is a misunderstanding of how the communists worked in that era. They did not admit they were communists then because communist organisations had been declared illegal from the time of the Malayan Emergency. So it became their

strategy to go underground and to secretly infiltrate groups throughout society. My good friend Samad Ismail, also an Utusan Melayu newsman, did not admit to being a communist at the time, but he turned out to be a card-carrying member of the Malayan Communist Party.

Samad was detained in Malaysia in the 1970s. I have no doubt there were detainees in Singapore who, like him, were underground communist members or strong communist sympathisers who fought for the same violent cause. Kuan Yew fought the

communists vigorously and Singapore is better off because of it.

To me, the key quality that distinguished him was his decisiveness. When he took a decision, he followed through and was willing to confront the consequences head on. That is the type of man he was, that is why I was most willing to serve in his Cabinet.

In his later years, we did not meet much, since he had his health problems and I had mine. But on the few occasions that I met him, I could see that he had mellowed.

If Kuan Yew had not entered politics, Singapore would have turned out very different. Perhaps Singapore would have been taken over by the Malaysian government, which would have installed a Malay leadership.

Perhaps the communists would have come into power after Separation.

Either way, Singapore would have been much worse off. Kuan Yew was a great man who loved his country and who answered the nation's call at a time of crisis and upheaval. For Singapore, there will not be another Lee Kuan Yew after Lee Kuan Yew.



MAY 14, 1955: Mr Lim Chin Siong, Mr Lee Kuan Yew and Chief Minister David Marshall meeting union members. Before entering politics, Mr Lee earned a reputation as a forceful anti-colonial lawyer whose heart was with the common man but whose skill, intelligence and reasonableness had the respect of the British.

# First among equals

Lee Kuan Yew led a tiny island nation from Third World to First. In the process, he had to strike a fine balance with the Japanese, British, leftists and communalists

By ELGIN TOH  
FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

THE midnight call from Mr S. Rajaratnam startled Mr Othman Wok. It was Aug 7, 1965.

"We go to Kuala Lumpur tomorrow," he said, "Mr Othman recalls. "I asked him why. 'Have they arrested PM?' I said."

Mr Rajaratnam did not explain. The two men were ministers in Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's Cabinet, and Singapore was then part of the 22-month-old federation of Malaysia.

Mr Othman's asking if Mr Lee had been detained reflected the tense atmosphere of the times; being summoned so suddenly to the Malaysian capital lent itself to gloomy and drastic interpretation.

Rumours that Mr Lee would be detained had circulated furiously for two years. A fundamental disagreement between him and Kuala Lumpur on the issue of race had raised temperatures close to boiling point.

The federal government had indeed drawn up a case, secretly, to have him arrested. Malay extremists had been clamouring publicly for his arrest, when they were not calling openly for him to be murdered.

Mr Othman and Mr Rajaratnam reached the Malaysian capital to find Mr Lee still a free man. What he needed to see them about so urgently was Singapore's impending exit from Malaysia.

Today, the Lee Kuan Yew story is a tale of a man who led a tiny island nation from Third World to First. But what narrative would have prevailed had he been locked up in the 1960s? A tragic hero cut down in his prime? A charismatic leader of great but unfulfilled promise?

In the event, he was not arrested, thanks in part to then British Prime Minister Harold Wilson. Through High Commissioner to Malaysia Anthony Head, Mr Wilson threatened that draconian action by Kuala Lumpur would trigger stronger reaction from Britain and the Commonwealth.

"Wilson was a good friend,"

Mr Lee would say years later.

He set his sights on doing law in England, but his plans were disrupted by the war in Europe. He went to Raffles College instead, where he met two men who would be his political comrades, Toh Chin Chye and Goh Keng Swee.

By 1942, the war had come to Singapore. Socially conditioned to respect the white man, he now witnessed the mighty British military capitulating to the smaller Japanese army within weeks.

"In 70 days of surprises, upsets and stupidities, British colonial society was shattered, and with it all the assumptions of the Englishman's superiority," he later wrote.

Under the Japanese, he came face to face with mortality – his own and that of many others. Once, he avoided execution during a retaliatory genocidal campaign against Chinese men by asking to leave a line to collect his belongings, then never returning.

He learnt Japanese and worked as an English editor for the Japanese propaganda department. Later, he tried his hand at construction, brokering and business – producing at one time a popular brand of stationery gum called Stikfas.

The Japanese Occupation proved the most important period in his life, he later said, because it provided him "vivid insights into the behaviour of human beings and human societies, their motivations and impulses".

My appreciation of governments, my understanding of power as the vehicle for revolutionary change, would not have been gained without this experience," he said. "I learnt more from the 3½ years of Japanese Occupation than any university could have taught me."

After the war, Mr Lee left for England. He spent a term at the London School of Economics, picking up socialist idealism from renowned professor Harold Laski, before moving to Cambridge because he disliked life in London.

At Cambridge he was soon reunited with Kwa Geok Choo, whom

he had got to know during the war. He helped the Queen's School to get admitted to Cambridge early to do law. They married secretly in England.

By the time he returned home in 1950, Mr Lee had grown not just anti-colonial, but also anti-British. He said: "It may have begun with my experience of the colour prejudice of the British working classes, the bus conductors and conductresses, the salesgirls and waitresses in the shops and restaurants, and the landladies in Hampstead I encountered in my search for digs."

His stellar grades gave him self-belief in dealings with British officials later on. "At Cambridge I got two firsts and a star for distinction. Harold MacMillan did not," he would say later, referring to the Conservative British Prime Minister at the time.

Heart in politics

HE DROPPED his Western name Harry when he was called to the Singapore Bar in 1950.

By then he was mulling over a political career and a Western name would not have gone down well on the ground. But his wife and close friends still called him Harry, and he continued to sign off as Harry in correspondence with them.

He started work at the law firm Laycock & Ong. He made a name for himself as a skilled barrister and remained there for five years before setting up his own firm, Lee & Lee, with his wife and brother Dennis in 1955.

But his heart was in politics. In the 1951 Legislative Council elections, he was election agent for his boss John Laycock, an Englishman, who was elected under the banner of the pro-British Progressive Party. Mr Laycock left politics after losing his Katong seat in the 1955 elections.

But Mr Lee's first instinct was not to join a party or form one yet. As an English-educated lawyer looking to lead a largely Chinese-educated population, he knew he first had to be recognised as one worth following on ac-

count of his beliefs and character. He brought his professional expertise to bear, representing, often pro bono, unions and other groups that got into legal skirmishes with the colonial government.

His first major breakthrough came with the postal workers' union, for whom he won a wage rise using a canny mix of strikes, negotiation and newspaper publicity.

I wanted to poach in this pond where the fish had been fed and nurtured by the communists, to use hook and line to catch as many as I could," he later wrote.

So began an uneasy alliance between two factions with similar short-term goals but starkly divergent ultimate visions. The incongruity would rip them apart.

The sheer diversity of the groups he acted for – from journalists and Chinese middle school students, to hawkers and liquor sellers – became an asset at elections, as beneficiaries transitioned seamlessly into campaigners and loyal party activists.

He was legal adviser to more than 100 unions and associations by the time the People's Action Party was formed in 1954, ahead of a legislative assembly election the following year, the first election that saw elected members outnumbering those appointed by the British.

Mr Lee made it clear that he would be vociferous, and that he opposed the government of the day as well as the system.

"This Constitution is a sham... (It is) colonialism in disguise," he bellowed in his first speech.

In opposition Mr Lee and his party colleagues – Mr Lim Chin Siong, Mr Devan Nair and Mr Goh Chew Chua – were strong advocates for independence, the most important issue in the political arena at the time. Indeed, Mr Marshall resigned after failing to secure independence in 1956, handing over the Chief Minister's post to Mr Lim Yew Hock.

Mr Lee said later that from the start he suspected their links to

the communists, who had been carrying out assassinations in Malaya and Singapore.

But, for Singapore's independence, he was prepared to seek common cause with anyone who signed up to the PAP's anti-colonial, socialist, non-communist agenda.

PAP leaders Toh and Ong Pang Boon recalled that in the party vote to decide who should be Prime Minister, Mr Ong Eng Guan, a populist lawyer, had tied with Mr Lee, and Dr Toh cast the deciding vote as party chairman.

Mr Lee disputed that account when it first came to light five decades later.

Shortly after taking office, Mr Lee rolled out policies and institutions that would become part of the PAP's lasting accomplishments. The Housing Board was formed to tackle a severe housing shortage. The National Library and People's Association were set up. School intake was doubled and campaigns to clean up the streets launched.

Mr Lee was ambitious but not populist. Within three weeks, he cut civil service pay. He also overruled ministers Toh and Ong Eng Guan's attempts to "decolonialise" parts of the public service by forcing expatriates to leave. As he saw it, an inexperienced government could ill-afford to offload perfectly competent civil servants and teachers.

Mr Lee and Mr Fong, on the other hand, saw the talks as supplementary to their preferred



AUG 9, 1965: An emotional PM Lee at the press conference at TV Singapore to announce Singapore's separation from Malaysia. He wept and called it "a moment of anguish". PHOTO: TV GRAB

All the time, however, the underlying asymmetries remained between Mr Lee and the PAP's leftists, who had joined the party ranks along with Mr Lim and Mr Fong and were largely Chinese-educated unionists.

Mr Lee, while opposed to colonialism, preferred to work within the law, and participated in earnest in the 1956 and 1957 London talks on Singapore moving towards greater autonomy.

Mr Lim and Mr Fong, on the other hand, saw the talks as supplementary to their preferred

means of bringing about change and gaining independence: demonstrations and strikes.

The Hock Lee bus strikes they led in 1955 spun out of control into riots, and four people died, much to Mr Lee's chagrin.

"I felt in my bones that to continue on the course Lim and Fong had embarked upon would end in political disaster," Mr Lee said.

His dilemma was that he could neither endorse his leftist comrades nor condemn them. Their movement, meanwhile, was fast gaining strength.

## Taking power

THE PAP swept into power in the legislative assembly elections of 1959, winning 43 out of 51 seats. This was the first election in Singapore under full internal self-government, with the British relinquishing control over everything except defence and foreign affairs.

Mr Lee became Singapore's first Prime Minister – the new post that superseded the Chief Minister post, under a new constitutional framework.

The PAP had held together as Mr Lim Yew Hock's Labour Front government self-destructed by allowing rampant corruption.

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His socialist rhetoric was reflective of the times. Mr Lee declared a "social revolution by peaceful means". But he also told capitalists that the more shops and factories they opened, the happier Singapore would be, and the desire in Singapore to "increase the size of the national cake is as great, if not greater, than the desire to share the cake more equally".

Mr Lee's views on democracy were to endure. He said in 1962: "If I were in authority indefinitely, without having to ask those who are governed whether they like what is being done, then I have not the slightest doubt that I could govern much more effectively in their own interests."

DECLASSIFIED British documents would later show that those suspicions were not far off the mark. In a cable to London in July 1961, Mr Philip Moore, then UK Commissioner in Singapore, wrote that the "left wing of the PAP are pressing for release of detainees and not even all members of Cabinet are aware that Singapore Government had not, since early 1960, proposed it".

He added: "Lee has put to us... that Singapore Government should order release of all detainees and that British and (Malayan) Federation Governments should thereafter countermand these instructions in the ISC."

Mr Lee's rivals would read his manoeuvring as disingenuousness. But his allies accepted it as necessary. "It's all politics. He had to do it in order to survive," said Mr Othman.

Eventually, the two factions parted ways on Mr Lee's proposal for Singapore to merge with Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak. With opposition to his plan growing, he tabled a confidence motion to, he said, "sort out the goats from the sheep".

The leftists surfaced, cutting Mr Lee's majority to one seat. He was under intense pressure. A majority of PAP branches defected to the breakaway leftist party, Barisan Sosialis. Crisis-ridden, Mr

Lee took leave from his ministerial duties to assess if the ground was being tugged from beneath his feet. It wasn't, he concluded.

From end-1962 to 1963, he went on a charm offensive, explaining the party split in 12 long radio broadcasts and touring all 51 wards to drum up support.

For two years, his government hung on as he fought battles in the assembly and outside it. The leftists worked feverishly to engineer party defections and stoke passions among workers.

Finally, voters delivered decisive wins to Mr Lee in the merger referendum of 1962 and the general election in the same year, when PAP won 37 seats, and Barisan, 13. The leftists never recovered.

The ultimate cause of their decline was an overwhelming desire for stability, said Mr James Fu, a left-leaning journalist who went on to become Mr Lee's press secretary from 1972 to 1993.

"Singaporeans were afraid that if we went on endlessly with the political turbulence – the strikes, the riots – we would eventually end up with nothing," he said.

More anguish

ONCE Singapore joined Malaya, Sabah and Sarawak, on Sept 16, 1963 – Mr Lee's 40th birthday – Mr Lee's travails might have been expected to end. In fact, more trouble lay ahead.

His difficult relationship with Malay nationalists, whom he bitterly labelled "Malay ultras", defined the brief but ill-fated merger. Some in Singapore, such as Finance Minister Goh Keng Swee and Mrs Lee, had warned that Singapore and the Malayan federation were too grossly incompatible. "But I had to give it a chance," Mr Lee would say years later.

The key disagreement was over race. Mr Lee wanted multiracialism right away, whereas his KL counterparts, even moderate ones, preferred a gentle passage towards it.

"The difference is that we want to create a united nation gradually and not by force," said then Malaysian Deputy PM Abdul Razak Hussein in an interview after Singapore's separation.

Mr Lee's abrasiveness did not help – he once called the Malaysian Chinese in Malaysian Prime Minister Tunku Abdul Rahman's ruling Alliance political enclaves. Nor did the Tunku's turning a blind eye to Malay extremists who travelled south to engineer race riots in Singapore in 1964.

But the final nail in the coffin was suspicion that Mr Lee had ambitions to be Malaysia's Prime Minister and – worse – there was a chance that he could be. Several multiracial parties from other parts of Malaysia had joined the PAP-led Malaysia Solidarity Convention, which he fought for a "Malaysian Malaysia".

Mr Lee fleshed out to the group the demographic argument – that non-Malays made up 60 per cent of the Malaysian population. "His ambitions knew no bounds," the Tunku would say later.

On Aug 9, 1965, Singapore was out of the Malaysian federation. The merger had lasted exactly one year, 10 months and 24 days.

Mr Lee wept when declaring the split, recognising that he now helmed a 582 sq km island of 1.87 million people with no armed forces and which was not self-sufficient in water.

"For me, it is a moment of anguish because all my life... you see, the whole of my adult life... I have believed in merger and the unity of these two territories," he said.

JUNE 5, 1959: At the Cabinet's swearing-in ceremony at the City Council Hall were (from left) Messrs Yong Nyuk Lin, Ong Pang Boon, Goh Keng Swee, Toh Chin Chye, Lee Kuan Yew, Ong Eng Guan, Ahmad Ibrahim, S. Rajaratnam and K.M. Byrne. ST FILE PHOTOS

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## MASTER POLITICIAN

Mr Lee (left) had strong views but was open to adjusting them, says Mr Yeo.



## THE LEE KUAN YEW I REMEMBER

George Yeo, 60, chairman of Kerry Logistics Network, part of the Kerry Group that is owned by Malaysian tycoon Robert Kuok. He was an MP

## Mr Lee receptive to new inputs

Mr Lee Kuan Yew had strong views but, at the same time, he did not have

a closed mind. I led a delegation to India in early 1993, which turned out to be a critical visit in the history of bilateral relations. India had run out of money and embarked on their own opening up and policies to reform. Our visit helped pave the way for closer cultural and economic ties

between Singapore and India, helping to spark what then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong later called "a mild India fever" among Singapore businessmen. A consortium of Singapore companies, Indian Industrial house Tata and the state government of Karnataka later jointly

invested in a \$250 million IT park in Bangalore. During that 1993 visit, we started in Delhi, we went to Agra, Jaipur, then to Bangalore, Mysore to Chennai. We came back and put up a very positive report on India. Kishore Mahbubani, then Foreign Ministry Permanent Secretary, told

from 1988 to 2011 and a Cabinet minister from 1991 to 2011

me that when he put up the report, one of the senior permanent secretaries told him: "You must be mad to put up such a report if you knew LKY's views about India." It went up to Cabinet and Mr Lee, as expected, poured scorn on it, saying we were just naive and so on. I

mean, he knew Nehru. He once told Rahul Gandhi: "I knew your father, your grandmother and your great-grandfather." So he had this longitudinal view of India, which we had to respect. He seriously doubted India's reform policies would happen. Every time he read a negative report

on India, he would send it down to me, you know. "For information", as if just to remind me. But at the same time, every time I went to India, which I did quite often in those days, he would ask me about it. He was curious and he wanted the inputs. And one day, he said on our

engagement in Bangalore: "It's good that these things are happening but anticipate a change of government." True enough, two years later, the government in charge of Bangalore changed, but the new government was even more supportive of cooperation with Singapore.

From that episode, I thought you must have a view and you must act on a view to be a leader. But at the same time, you must not close your mind to new inputs. And while you may disagree initially, at least have a doubt that you may be wrong – which he did and he then adjusted.

# A life devoted entirely to Singapore

Lee Kuan Yew was obsessive about securing Singapore's success, and compulsive in demanding every ounce of effort from himself and others in shaping its destiny

By ZURAI DAH IBRAHIM and ANDREA ONG FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

WHEN Singapore split from Malaysia, one major matrimonial asset required more than a little time to divvy up: their joint Malaysia-Singapore Airlines.

The day finally came seven years later in 1973, when Singapore Airlines (SIA) was ready to take to the skies.

Mr Lee Kuan Yew had taken a personal interest in the process. But when he spoke to the Singapore Air Transport Workers' Union on the eve of SIA's formation, there was no nationalistic cheerleading.

The airline was not a prestige project, he told them. If they could not turn in a profit, "we should have no compunction in closing a service down", he warned.

"The future of Singapore Airlines depends more on the reality SIA leaves behind on their passengers than on their advertisements."

Three decades later, with SIA famed as one of the world's top airlines, Mr Lee refused to be swept off his feet by his glamorous image.

Intervening in 2004 over a dispute between its pilots and management, he told them he would not allow anyone to endanger SIA. "Both management and unions, you play this game, there are going to be broken heads."

Recalling similar squabbles in 1980 when he intervened personally, he declared: "This is a job that has to be finished and I'll finish it."

This was vintage LKY. Cutting through the fluff. Setting no-nonsense targets. And leaving no room for doubt that any "games" would be tolerated – other than the one he had decided was in Singapore's best interests.

The histories of former colonies are replete with politicians who shone in the independence struggle but stumbled in office, when the enemy was no longer the distant imperialist but dysfunction within – corruption, poverty, ethnic or religious conflict.

Mr Lee was a rare case of a leader who never cut himself or his team any slack even after the job appeared done. Perhaps this was because of the unforgiving circumstances the People's Action Party (PAP) found itself in, with freedom first secured as part of an uneasy federation in 1963, followed by unceremonious expulsion in 1965.

He brought to each situation a voracious appetite for information to feed his rational calculations. He knew the value of having differing views within government, which partly explains his obsession with creaming off the most intellectually able to staff the public sector. At the same time, he expected no obstruction from individuals or institutions outside of government.

Not surprisingly, therefore, how people view his political style depended a lot on where they stood – within or outside the trusted establishment. Former ambassador Chan Heng Chee was among those who had regular lunches with him. Her lunch group included two other top diplomats, Prof Kishore Mahbubani and Prof Tommy Koh. She recalls Mr Lee bouncing off his ideas, eager for a robust exchange. "He looked like he was fighting in court... a little stern, but I think that was his natural

look," she said. "He wanted people to come back to disagree with him, so that he didn't think that everything, that his ideas were all absolutely correct."

He was helped by what he described as the leftists' "costly mistake" of walking out of Parliament in 1965, eventually ceding to the PAP every seat in the House.

From 1968, the PAP commanded full control of the chamber and made a clean sweep of the next three general elections.

In 1981, the Anson by-election broke that stranglehold but still the PAP dominated, remaining largely impervious to assault.

Mr Lee ensured such control by widening the PAP's appeal to straddle as broad a middle ground as possible. "I intended to leave the opposition only the extreme left and right," he once said.

He was also determined to secure the political space for sound policymaking, convinced that the unruly aspects of democracy were incompatible with good governance.

He tamed labour unions and put them on a path of a cooperative symbiotic relationship with the ruling party and employers. He restructured the press to align its corporate interests with those of the establishment.

And he neutered the influence that powerful Chinese businessmen could have had on the system, relying instead on bureaucrats to promote economic growth.

Of course, the PAP Government was always also a team effort and the country had what was its first A-team under Mr Lee. For the economy and industry, he had the help of Dr Goh Keng Swee and Mr Hon Sui Sen; for diplomacy, Mr S. Rajaratnam.

To overcome the housing shortage, he turned to Mr Lim Kim San to build on an unprecedented scale. But while these individuals were men of legendary ability, it was Mr Lee who was relied on to get the politics right.

"We are willing to take unpopular steps if the long-term advantages to Singapore justify the policy," said Dr Goh in a 1984 speech.

"We can do this for two reasons: first, our track record; second, the ability of the Prime Minister to carry the public on difficult and unpopular issues."

On how Mr Lee was the first among equals in a team that battled exceptionally well together, Dr Goh added: "We were also lucky to have as our skipper a man of outstanding qualities. I recall several occasions when all seemed lost. There appeared to be no answer to the terrifying dominance of the communist open front organisations in full cry. Yet he will come out with some devilish strategem to spring upon the enemy and confront them."

He did so with a combination of legislation, the seeding of an expectation of rectitude in political leadership and an unrelenting approach to crushing those he considered enemies of the PAP's project.

The party also relied on his larger-than-life presence in the political arena. When he took to the stage, it was never about telling Singaporeans what they wanted to hear, but persuading them of what he believed they needed to do. "We have never allowed ourselves to forget that popular government does not mean that we have to be popular in every act of government," he said. "It means that policies in the public interest, however unpopular, must be taken in time for the benefits to be appreciated before the next general election."

Alongside the major success stories such as the building of Changi Airport and the Singapore Armed Forces are a series of wrenching moves that were painful at the time.

He explained to Singaporeans why they needed to be uprooted from their familiar enclaves, and scattered and re-housed in high-rise buildings. He argued for English as the main language, despite the political price of alienating the strong Chinese lobby.

He prodded workers to salt away part of their income in retirement savings. And he pummeled, cajoled and pushed Singaporeans into altering their behaviour, as he waged war against littering, spitting, men with long hair and singhhood.

How did Mr Lee succeed in moving and changing a people? Once, when asked about the qualities she admired most in him, his late wife Kwa Geok Choo cited "his powers of persuasion".

Former senior minister of state Chng Jit Koon, 81, who worked under Mr Lee for 28 years, remembered some bitter pills that he had to swallow as a result of Mr Lee's policies, but that he was eventually persuaded to support.

"The policy of replacing dialects with Mandarin, that was very painful," Mr Chng said. "I went on walkabouts and old ladies would scold me and slam the door in my face because we had stopped radio broadcasts in dialect. But Mr Lee said, 'For the sake of our future generations, we must be determined to carry this out.' And I agreed with him."

A former Cabinet colleague from the second-generation leadership, Mr S. Dhanabalan, corrects the perception that Mr Lee lorded it over those around him.

"He never said, 'This is what I want, do it.' He had very strong convictions, but he was very clear that he had to persuade you in a way that he would buy into what he wanted to do," Mr Dhanabalan said.

"If he couldn't persuade you, he would spend time, even postpone his decision, in order to use his arguments and persuasive powers to show you why it should be done that way."

"He almost felt it was a failure on his part if he could not persuade you to see things the way he did."

Former MP Teo Hong Tee remembers how, as a secondary school boy in the 1950s, he would cycle from one political rally to the next, in search of Lee Kuan Yew.

"I went just to listen to him speak," Mr Teo, 72, said. "He made speeches in three languages which could inspire the people to cheer and shout. The crowd stayed until the end. Nobody moved, rain or shine."

And there was a combative fire in Mr Lee that could sway the crowd as he challenged his opponents with fighting words.

If he spent the first two decades after independence trying to inculcate governance from the captive, adjusting his clothes, he next turned his attention to the challenge of reproducing good governance.

Again, this was born from a mind constantly playing out worst-case scenarios – in this



JAN 19, 1963: Over lunch at the Yio Chu Kang Community Centre during a tour of the island's "farm belt", Mr Lee told villagers that Singapore would still prosper



JAN 9, 1968: The Singapore team led by Mr Lee meeting the British team at City Hall to discuss new proposals on withdrawal talks. In the team were members of

Teo. "His words really carried a lot of weight."

His speeches took people beyond themselves, motivated them, helped them make sense of a Singapore suddenly propelled to independence.

"If he said to me, 'Look, I need you to do your part to sacrifice for the country', I would drop everything and go. That was the kind of power he had," said veteran journalist and political watcher Seah Chiang Nee, 75, who went with Mr Lee on his travels overseas as a Straits Times correspondent in the 1970s and early 1980s.

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case, that of protest votes installing an incompetent or, worse, rogue government.

There are other aspects of Mr Lee's legacy that have been deeply embedded in the foundations of Singapore politics.

One is the high expectations that people have of public servants, in particular Singaporeans' zero tolerance for corruption.

Former Straits Times editor-in-chief Cheong Yip Seng, 71, relates a story of how, when Mr Lee and his family spent holidays by the sea in Changi, his children would sometimes pluck fruit from the trees growing around the chalets. Mr Lee would insist on paying for the fruit himself.

Mr Lee's home at 38 Oxley Road was spartan and unpretentious.

Mr Nair, the founding figure behind the National Trades Union Congress, steered the labour movement through several explosive episodes – such as the 1980 dispute between SIA pilots and management.

He also famously severed ties with one of his staunchest comrades, Mr C.V. Devan Nair, the veteran trade unionist who had been with the PAP since its genesis.

Mr Lee was unbending, courageous and single-minded in the face of the odds. He acted like he had a dare to prove himself.

He was obsessive about securing Singapore's long-term success, and compulsive in demanding every ounce of effort from himself and others in shaping his country's destiny.

The general impression is that he was a leader who, once he had made a decision, he would stick to it. In making decisions, he would canvass ideas and views before he made up his mind. Then when he had come to a conclusion, there would be further discussion and more modifications. He was very keen to listen to people.

Sometimes I managed to change his mind. In his assessment of people, there were instances where he had a very good assessment of someone but I did not. So he

in spite of "provincial" differences with Malaysia – so long as both sides "see eye to eye" on major issues. ST FILE PHOTOS

PAP's first A-team, including Mr S. Rajaratnam (diplomacy), Dr Goh Keng Swee and Mr Hon Sui Sen (economy and industry), and Mr Lim Kim San (housing).

## A leader who's ruthless in demanding honesty

S. Dhanabalan, 77, MP from 1976 to 1996, held various ministerial portfolios from 1980 to 1992, was chairman of Temasek Holdings from 1996 to Aug 1, 2013

TO CALL Lee Kuan Yew my friend would not be quite right. More accurately, we were colleagues. I don't think he had many friends, because he was so focused on doing what was good for the nation, and that would require him sometimes to be against his friends. If he was too friendly with anyone, that could colour his decision, so he was very careful.

Many leaders of countries are honest. India's Jawaharlal Nehru was honest. Julius Nyerere in Nigeria was honest. Manmohan Singh is honest. But that's not enough. You must be prepared to demand honesty and be ruthless with your relatives and friends if they are not. Otherwise you can't get the honest culture established.

Lee Kuan Yew was not only honest, but he was also ruthless in demanding honesty from his colleagues. You could have been his colleague, you could have fought with him through the long march, it didn't matter. If you are dishonest, you're out.

One that I think in order to make sure he did not soften in this approach, he was very careful about establishing friendships with people.

I resigned from Cabinet (in 1992) because I had a great difference of view over the use of the Internal Security Act in the 1987 arrests. (In 1987, 22 people – many linked to the Catholic Church – were arrested and detained without trial under the ISA for alleged involvement in a "Marxist conspiracy".)

Lee Kuan Yew thought that mine was a Christian view, because he knew I was a Christian. But it was not a hard-headed political view. We had a difference and the whole Cabinet knew.

The way he saw it depended on his experience, and he had seen many traumatic experiences with the communists and how they infiltrated legitimate organisations to get what they wanted. I was looking at it from my point of view, without the experiences he had.

I wouldn't venture to say whether he was right or I was right. So it was not that he was ruthless, but that he saw dangers where I didn't. Whether it was real danger or not remains to be seen.

His greatest strength as a leader was his foresight – his ability to see what is likely to happen, and to persuade people with arguments. Not just words, but the way he put his words across, the way he was able to transmit his conviction to people.

One thing that remains very strongly in my mind is how different he was in his decision-making process from what the general impression was.

The general impression is that he was a leader who, once he had made a decision, he would stick to it. In making decisions, he would canvass ideas and views before he made up his mind. Then when he had come to a conclusion, there would be further discussion and more modifications. He was very keen to listen to people.

Sometimes I managed to change his mind. In his assessment of people, there were instances where he had a very good assessment of someone but I did not. So he

argued his case, and I argued my case but he didn't change his mind. Later he discovered that he was not right, so he changed his mind about the person.

I also had differences with him on a couple of policies, but he convinced me to his side. I had some very strong views about Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools, which favoured Chinese-language schools, because I thought one or two government schools should be selected for people of other races to enjoy similar special assistance.

He explained that this was because the Chinese schools and the people behind the Chinese schools – the clan associations and their students – were very important components of Singapore.

In fact, in the 1940s and 1950s, the majority of school-going children were in Chinese schools, not in English schools. Yet he had managed to persuade the Chinese community to switch to English as a medium of instruction so that we could have one national-type school with Chinese, Malay or Tamil as the second language.

But in order to get that accepted, he agreed to put a certain number of schools in a special position.

If you look at what's happening in Malaysia today, you will realise how important that decision was.

In the total scheme of things, it was a very small price to pay, and it was key, because first, it changed our whole education system, and second, the timing was fortuitous.

I believe that if he had tried to do it 10 years later, after the 1969 riots, it would not have been possible. There would have been very strong resistance and I don't think the population would have accepted it.

The other policy I disagreed with him on was the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) system. I was against it because I was probably more of an idealist and not realistic enough.

I felt that if the Chinese in my constituency did not want to elect me, then so be it, because I saw being Singaporean more important than anything else. I thought that if the Chinese Singaporean or the Indian Singaporean was not prepared to vote for someone of another race just because he was of a different



JAN 6, 1981: Mr Lee with Mr Dhanabalan (second from left) who took his oath of allegiance before President Benjamin Sheares in the Istana State Room. Behind Mr Dhanabalan is Cabinet Secretary Wong Choo Sen.

ST FILE PHOTO

race, then there was something basically wrong with our society.

But his argument was that you have to have minority representation in Parliament – so two Chinese with one minority-race candidate in one constituency of three people could be tailored in such a way that you have fair representation of minorities in Parliament.

He felt strongly that if he didn't do this, there would be no minority representation. In making the argument he even offered to put me in a single-seat constituency. So I said: "No, I am not talking about myself!"

But I've come to the position now that this was the right thing to do. But what I disagree with is that GRCs were expanded from three members to five or six.

Though we had disagreements, it was not difficult working with Lee Kuan Yew. He knew that my views were sincere even if he didn't agree with them. He respected people who had different views from him, he didn't think it was because you were not as bright.

He spent many hours sharing his experiences with the younger ministers. When he travelled overseas, he would take quite a few of us along. On these trips, every evening after dinner, we would sit around and talk, and he would give us his assessment after discussions with world leaders.

He never tired of explaining something again and again, until we almost absorbed his culture of thinking and his approach to finding solutions to problems.

Dr Goh Keng Swee once said: The PAP needs Lee more than Lee needs the PAP. And that was the fact. You cannot escape that fact.

I feel that he stepped down as PM in 1990 when he needed not have. He was still quite vigorous and healthy and could have led the country for another 10 years.

But he himself was keen that he should go long before he lost his competence.

When he did step down, it was a very poignant moment. I remember it very clearly. It was in the City Hall chambers during the swearing in, and as he was coming down the steps, his eyes were red. It was quite an emotional moment for him, because he had put his whole life into this.



## UNORTHODOX LEADER

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015

## THE LEE KUAN YEW I REMEMBER

Liu Thai Ker, 77, is chairman of the Centre for Liveable Cities, former chief executive of the Housing Board, and former chief executive and chief

Problem solver,  
master persuader

MR LEE Kuan Yew was a worrier. But he was a problem solver too – not just of problems today, he anticipated problems to come.

That's why the Housing Board, and

the rest of Singapore under his leadership, was continuously looking at problems and solutions, and continuously sharpening our skills.

When it comes to solving problems, Singapore is extremely disciplined. I would say this was a personal trait of Mr Lee's and it percolated rather effectively into the civil service. That's how a lot of his ideas got implemented.

While I was chief executive of HDB, he asked me periodically to take him on tours around the housing estates. He was not just a leader sitting in an air-conditioned room. He wanted to see things first-hand.

Around the early 1980s, we noticed that certain housing estates attracted people of some ethnic groups more than usual. Mr Lee was worried they would create ethnic enclaves.

planner of the Urban Redevelopment Authority

You could disagree with him to his face provided you could explain to him with good reason why, and he would agree with you if it was reasonable. This was a side to him that probably not many Singaporeans have understood well.

He did not worry about his face, he worried about Singapore. He was a master persuader. He persuaded people and accepted people

persuading him, but nothing arbitrary was acceptable or tolerated, and his reputation of toughness came from the fact that he did not tolerate anything that was not rational.

I did not happen him most for enabling Singapore to move from Third World to First. Between 1960 and 1985, we turned a backward city into a place where there are no homeless, no squatters.

Today we have no poverty ghettos. Through HDB, we integrated and upgraded the poor into HDB estates with no ethnic enclaves. How many cities in the world can boast this?

It did not happen by chance, it happened by spotting and solving these problems, by anticipating instead of reacting.

When he became prime minister, he introduced a lot of

policies which were against world trends. One was to build high-rise, high-density housing. They were condemned in those days by experts in the developed world.

For many years, I was fascinated by his daredevil approach and wondered what gave him the courage to go ahead.

Then it dawned on me: When you have thought through a problem very

carefully, you don't give a damn what people say. Then you have the courage to go ahead to do it.

And this, to me, was his core value: clarity equals courage. It had a profound influence on my approach to work.

He created modern Singapore and nurtured modern Singaporeans. Our discipline and strong sense of nation – we all owe these to him.

Did Mr Lee create  
a Singapore in  
his own image?

From cleaning up dirty rivers and city grounds, to reforming the language environment, Lee Kuan Yew nagged and cajoled a nation into improving its social habits. He even tried to tell them whom to marry.

By CHUA MUJI HOONG  
OPINION EDITOR  
and RACHEL CHANG  
ASSISTANT POLITICAL EDITOR

LEE Kuan Yew was a chain-smoker until 1957, puffing away two packs a day. Then he lost his voice in the middle of campaigning for a City Council election and could not thank voters. He quit cold turkey, suffering withdrawal symptoms for a fortnight.

By the 1960s, he was allergic to tobacco smoke. So smoking was banned in his office and the Cabinet room.

In the 1970s, an anti-smoking campaign banned cigarette advertising in Singapore. Progressively, there was less and less public space for smokers to have their puff.

Question: Did Mr Lee create a Singapore in his own image? Did he socially engineer and shape the behaviour of a nation according to his fastidious preferences?

It is impossible to tease out where a leader's preferences begin, and where a country's values end. The prerogative of a leader after all is to shape an organisation, a country, according to his will.

Mr Lee was notoriously fussy about order and cleanliness. Not surprisingly, Singapore is known the world over for both even today. He believed a tidy city bespoke an orderly government, a people with good social habits, and pride in their surroundings.

In November 1959, leading a mass drive to clean up the city, he said: "This is one of the hallmarks of civilisation. One can be rich and filthy or poor and clean. Cleanliness and tidiness are indications of the level of tidiness of a people. We must improve on our standard as one of the cleanest cities in Asia."

He took a personal interest in cleaning and greening the city state. He was the eyes and ears of the Public Works Department, the National Parks Division, the anti-mosquito unit, the Public Utilities Board.

He noticed when hawkers boarded up drains they had no business covering; when a street-seller rigged up power lines and put up an illicit fridge on a roundabout. He told the story of how an empty patch at Novena housed first a Chinese shrine, a makeshift tent days later, then a fence and eventually a hut. He disapproved, sent a note and got things rectified.

He hit the roof one day in late 1964 when he looked out of his City Hall office across the Padang and saw some cows grazing on the Esplanade. He called a meeting of senior officers, including permanent secretaries, and gave them a shelling.

The riots that July, he said, had led to some disorder, but it was high time officials got their act together. "The city looks more slovenly. There is more litter, more dirt, more cows wandering around circuses, more stray dogs, more flies, more mosquitoes... People take advantage of a slackening of the administrative grip on the situation," he said.

Urging the officers to get things back to normal, he said: "It is necessary for people's morale.

You know in the army, they polish their buttons, they polish their shoes, they paint the steps. It gives men that little astringent to keep them bucked up, and not get slovenly and soft."

But there were also prosaic reasons for the massive cleaning up. As he recounted in his memoirs in 2000, "one compelling reason to have a clean Singapore is our need to collect as much as possible of our rainfall of 95 inches a year". The waterways and drainage system had to be cleaned up so the rainwater run-offs can be collected.

The other reason was political: so people would feel good about their living environment and have a greater sense of belonging. He thought it would have been politically disastrous for an elected government to do as the British did, and keep nice green expatriate areas while leaving other public spaces to deteriorate.

Cleaning up was just the beginning. He was adamant about changing the social habits of an entire people so they would learn social graces, care for their surroundings, and not litter, spit, deface or destroy the spruced-up new look.

In a crowded, urban city, he believed that good habits like courtesy and queueing lubricated daily life.

He wanted Singaporeans to learn the habits of productive workers quickly: to be punctual, work hard, not slacken, and take ownership of their tasks.

In her 1971 book about the People's Action Party, Singapore: The Politics Of Survival, 1965-1967, former diplomat and political scientist Chan Heng Chee wrote: "The most striking feature of PAP thinking after Sepa-

Cleaning up was just the beginning. He was adamant about changing the social habits of an entire people so they would learn social graces, care for their surroundings, and not litter, spit, deface or destroy the spruced-up new look... He wanted Singaporeans to learn the habits of productive workers quickly: to be punctual, work hard, not slacken, and take ownership of their tasks.

ration... is the party's unshaken belief that the survival of Singapore will depend on the willingness and ability of the Singapore citizen to adopt a new set of attitudes, a new set of values, and new set of perspectives: in short, on the creation of a new man."

Mr Lee and his government created a New Man – and Woman and Child – through mass campaigns, legislation where needed, carrots and sticks, and unrelenting nagging.

The Keep Singapore Clean campaign, which began as a drive to get civil servants to help clean up public areas in 1959, was rebranded as a national campaign in 1968 and continues today as the Clean and Green campaign.

One long-running campaign from 1970 to at least 1974 was against men keeping long hair, to dissuade people from adopting a decadent Western hippie lifestyle.

Government service center staff were told to ignore long-haired citizens and serve them last. Long-haired postal workers faced the sack.

That campaign may strike today's observer as quaint at best or paternalistic at worst. But, in fact, the revolution against hippies – a countercultural movement originating in the United States that came to be associated with free sex, the use of drugs, brightly coloured clothes and long hair – was not confined to Singapore.

A Time magazine article on July 7, 1967 described hippies in America as "dangerously deluded dropouts, candidates for a very sound spanking and a cram course in civics."

Mr Lee favoured a different kind of ethos. He wanted Singaporeans to be rugged, disciplined, clean-living and hardworking. So the thrade against decadent hippies went on for years.

Meanwhile, the Use Your Hands campaign from 1976 got students, parents, teachers, principals and civil servants back to school on weekends to scrub classrooms, clean windows and weed gardens – to cultivate respect for the dignity of manual labour.

## Many people, two tongues

LANGUAGE was another battlefield in the move to create a New Man. Singapore was a polyglot, with Chinese people who spoke Mandarin as well as Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, Hainanese, Hakka and other dialects. Indians could speak Tamil, Hindi, Malayalam or Punjabi. Malay was the official language and the lingua franca between races. English was the language of bureaucracy. Then there was the local patois, broken English, which would later be dubbed Singlish.

Mr Lee set out with one firm goal: to make English the common language in schools and in Singapore. This would link Singapore with the world and, as a neutral language among the races, ease communication and depoliticise language policy.

He also believed each community should retain its language, since language is the way culture and values are transmitted. Children learnt Mandarin, Tamil or Malay as a second language in school. The bilingual policy – English-medium instruction, with language lessons in one's mother tongue – remains today.

The biggest social engineering experiment of all was the



NOV 23, 1959 (above): Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew (centre) leading a mass drive to spring-clean the city for the National Loyalty Week in December.

SEPT 7, 1979 (right): Mr Lee speaking at the opening of the Speak Mandarin Campaign at the Singapore Conference Hall. He made repeated pleas to Chinese parents to stop using dialects at home and to speak Mandarin to help lighten the learning load of their children. ST FILE PHOTOS

long-running Speak Mandarin Campaign which began in 1979 and continues today. It started out as a way to get Chinese Singaporeans to drop dialects and switch to Mandarin.

His rationale was simple: "The brain is like the computer. It has so many megabytes and that's the maximum you can hold in your mind – words, phrases, grammatical rules. If we had not had the Mandarin campaign, today the teaching of Mandarin in schools would have failed and Singaporeans would be speaking adulterated Hokkien... Because we have seven or eight major dialects, it's not possible to keep them all."

The media was a major partner in the change. Channel 8, a Chinese-language television channel, banned dialect advertising in 1978 and phased out all dialect programming in 1981. Popular Cantonese Hong Kong drama series were dubbed in Mandarin, and Singapore began making its own Mandarin drama series and TV entertainment shows.

Changing a language environment is no mean feat. Those who made a living from dialect, like newscasters and storytellers, remained unhappy for years. An entire generation of elderly Chinese

speakers who were unable to pick up Mandarin was alienated.

Families were divided: When parents spoke to their children in Mandarin or English, the little ones could no longer understand the dialect-speaking grandparents.

There was much grumbling and yet the country did shift its speech habits. When the Speak Mandarin Campaign began in 1979, Mr Lee envisaged that in five years, Chinese students would forsake dialect for Mandarin and Mandarin would become the common language in coffee shops, hawker centres and shops.

He was not far wrong: A survey in 1989 showed that pupils from dialect-speaking homes dropped from 64.4 per cent in 1980 to 7.2 per cent. Hawkers who used Mandarin rose from 1.2 per cent in 1979 to 21.9 per cent.

## Meddling with genes

THE 1980s saw Mr Lee moving in to what some regarded as a more disturbing trend of social engineering as he tried to influence personal decisions on marriage and having babies.

The 1980 Census had shown



that many better-educated women were not marrying early, and those who did marry were having fewer children than less educated ones.

The falling fertility rate among educated women was the direct result of the Government's all-too-successful birth control policies of the 1960s and 1970s, which made sterilisation and induced abortion widely available. Total fertility rate was 4.62 in 1965. By 1980, it was 1.74. In 2012, it was 1.29.

In 1983, Mr Lee said in his annual National Day Rally speech that "whilst we have brought down the birth rate, we have reduced it most unequally. The better-educated the woman is, the

utory boards and government-owned companies. It came to public attention only in March 1985 in response to a parliamentary question.

In 1984, the Graduate Mothers' Scheme gave children of graduate mothers priority admission to schools. Women who were better-educated – defined as those with at least five O-level passes – could also get generous tax benefits if they had children, with tax breaks of 5, 10 and 15 per cent of earned income respectively for the first, second and third child.

All these policies were to encourage better-educated married women to have more children.

Other women, however, were paid to Stop At Two or even at one. Women below 30 who agreed to sterilisation after the first or second child could get a cash grant of \$10,000 – provided both the parents did not have any O-level passes, and earned less than \$1,500 a month together. If she went on to have another child, she would have to repay the \$10,000 cash grant with 10 per cent compound interest a year.

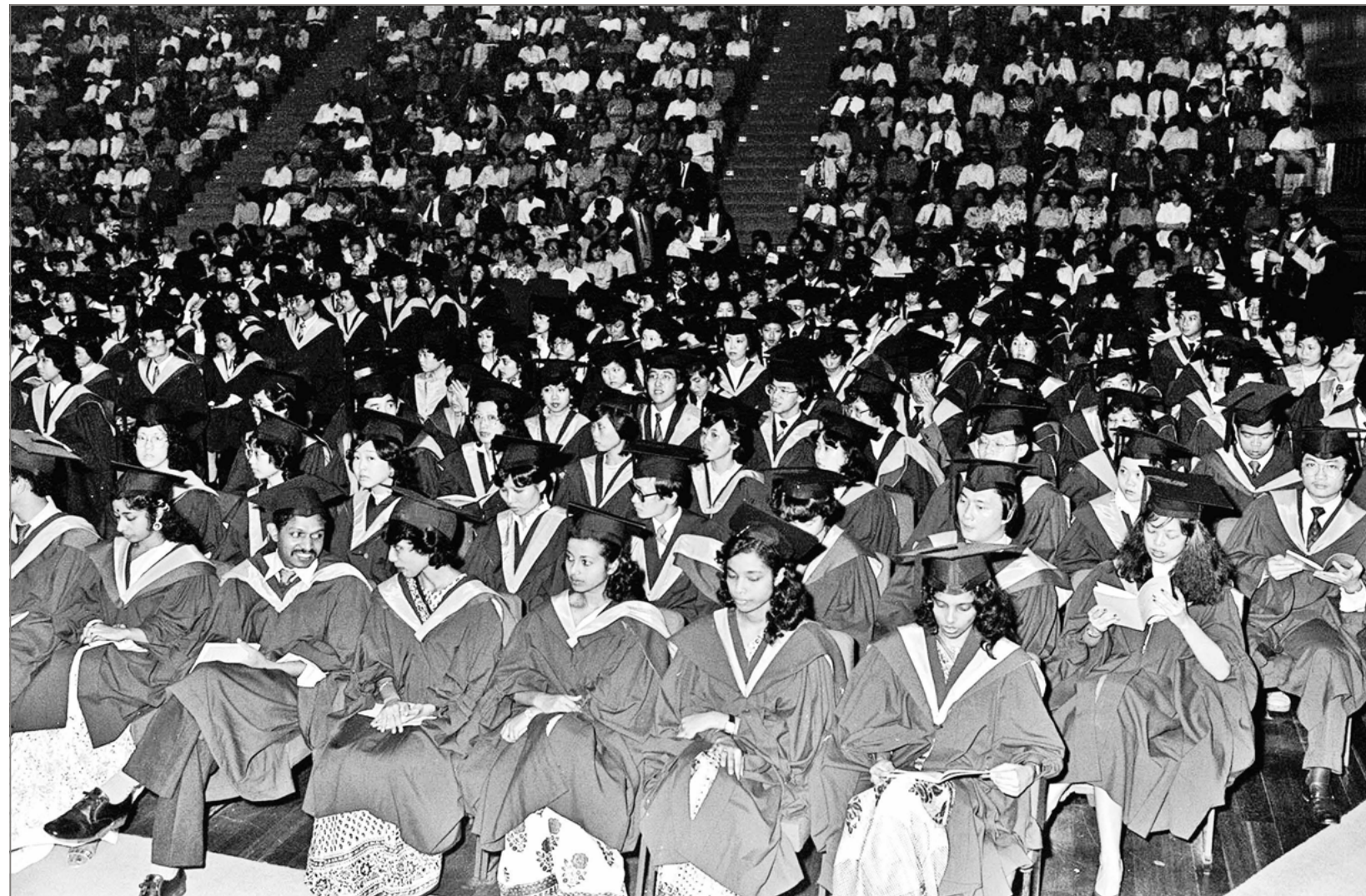
The policies sprang from Mr Lee's belief that intelligence is an inheritable trait.

Then Foreign Minister S. Dhanabalan recalls that a few Cabinet ministers, including himself, had non-graduate wives and were "not enthusiastic" about Mr Lee's belief in the causal link from graduate mothers to bright children.

His views were translated into policy. Matchmaking services were started. The Social Development Unit began quietly in 1984 to organise activities for single graduates in the civil service, stat-



1960s-1970s: Government service staff were told to serve long-haired men last (above left) to dissuade people from adopting a decadent Western hippie lifestyle, while low-income, lowly educated women were paid to Stop At Two (above right). PHOTOS: SPH FILE, FAMILY PLANNING BOARD



1980s: To encourage better-educated women to have more children, the Graduate Mothers' Scheme was introduced in 1984. It gave children of graduate mothers priority admission to schools. Women with at least five O-level passes could also get generous tax benefits if they had more children. ST FILE PHOTO

Critics may see Mr Lee's efforts at social engineering as instruments of control, believing his policies were meant to impose order and produce obedient citizens to be led by a small leadership bred from an intellectual elite. But there is another less sinister way to interpret those attempts: He simply wanted to improve Singapore by changing the social habits of its people.

"Not that all the children of gardeners or labourers are duds. Occasionally, two grey horses produce a white horse, but very few. If you have two white horses, the chances are you breed white horses."

"It's seldom spoken publicly because those who are not white horses say, 'You're degrading me.' But it's a fact of life. You get a good mare, you don't want a dud stallion to breed with your good mare. You get a poor foal."

His eugenics and procreation policies cast a long shadow on policies in Singapore. "You see the elitism in us today. The way parents push their kids to the top schools. The way we look down on the plumber, the electrician," said former Nominated MP and civil society activist Braema Mathi. "That has created real divisions."

Critics may see Mr Lee's efforts at social engineering as instruments of control, believing his policies were meant to impose order and produce obedient citizens to be led by a small leadership bred from an intellectual elite.

But there is another less sinister way to interpret those attempts: He simply wanted to improve Singapore by changing the social habits of its people.

He was someone who saw human nature as mutable and capable of improvement.

He might have believed in genes as destiny – but destiny to him was not immutable. He saw culture as a determining factor ex-

plaining why some societies declined and others thrived.

As he said in the 1998 book Lee Kuan Yew: The Man And His Ideas: "Genes cannot be created, right? Unless you start tinkering with it, as they may be able to do one day. But the culture you can tinker with. It's slow to change, but it can be changed – by experience – otherwise human beings will not survive. If a certain habit does not help survival, well, you must quickly unlearn that habit."

He believed that the descendants of coolies and peasants who made up Singapore could unlearn bad habits, and could be cajoled, trained and nagged into higher levels of achievement than might have been expected from those of such mundane stock.

As he put it in his memoir From Third World To First, published in 2000 when he was 77: "We would have been a grosser, ruder, cruder society had we not made these efforts to persuade our people to change their ways."

"We did not measure up as a cultivated, civilised society and were not ashamed to set about trying to become one in the shortest time possible. First we educated and exhorted our people. After we had persuaded and won over a majority, we legislated to punish the wilful minority."

"It has made Singapore a more pleasant place to live in. If this is a 'many state', I am proud to have fostered one."

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## LEE KUAN YEW, MY FATHER

THE LEE KUAN YEW I REMEMBER

Lee Wei Ling, 60, is Mr Lee Kuan Yew's only daughter and director of the National Neuroscience Institute

## My father was a workaholic

MY PARENTS and I were in hospital waiting for my father to have a stent put in, but none of us said a word.

It was not because of an unspoken tension over the state of his health – we were all too busy working. There my father sat on his hospital bed huddled over his laptop with my mother, who was checking his draft, while I, too, had a computer on my lap.

As I watched the three of us in the

room, it occurred to me that any passer-by would get no sense at all that my father would soon be going in for an angioplasty.

Yes, my father was a workaholic, and as a 73-year-old holding the post of senior minister in 1996, he did not see his impending surgery as reason enough to stop working.

But the episode also showed me how my father stoically approached the challenges before him without a hint of emotion or anxiety. He was unflappable.

He found it was never helpful to panic, because doing so would never positively affect the outcome of any situation.

I believe these were the steely qualities that took him through his 31 tumultuous years as prime minister, but they may not always work as well at home.

In my family, I am most like my father in temperament, and when you have two strong-willed people in one house, it can get difficult to control.

Occasionally, we would get into fights when neither of us would back down.

In 2002, one such disagreement resulted in my moving out of our Oxley Road home.

My father wanted me, an exercise fiend, to stop working out because my bones had become so fragile that I

suffered repeated fractures.

He called me into his study and gave me an ultimatum.

“The doctors told me you could cripple yourself with the exercise. As long as you are staying in this house, I’ve to look after your welfare,” he said.

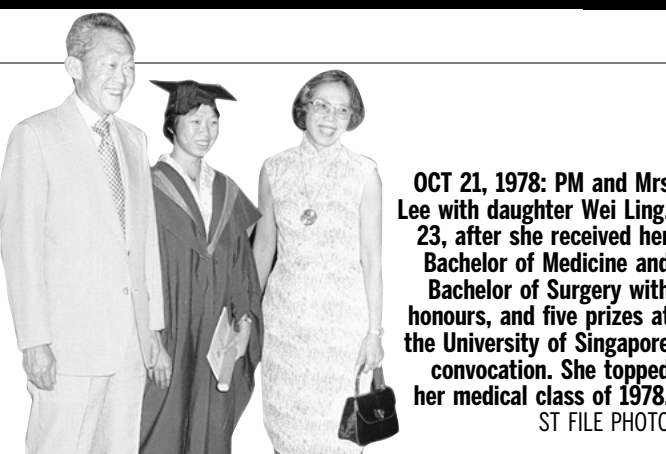
Not wanting to give up my

exercise, I decided to move out to live with my brother Loong.

It was probably not the response my father had anticipated, but he realised then that I was a 47-year-old adult who was going to make up my own mind on things.

The next year, when I told my father I was going to hike a volcanic

crater in Hawaii immediately after I was discharged from hospital, he gave a very different response. “Be careful.” He said nothing more.

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015

OCT 21, 1978: PM and Mrs Lee with daughter Wei Ling, 23, after she received her Bachelor of Medicine and honours, and five prizes at the University of Singapore convocation. She topped her medical class of 1978. ST FILE PHOTO

Lee Hsien Loong, 63, is Mr Lee Kuan Yew's eldest child. He has been Prime Minister of Singapore since August 2004

## When you needed him, he was there

By ZURAIHAH IBRAHIM and ANDREA ONG FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

PRIME Minister Lee Hsien Loong had a habit of tugging his shirt sleeves near his shoulders whenever he was engrossed in a conversation. So did Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

This was one of the matter-of-fact observations the elder Mr Lee made when he was asked if father and son had similar traits. Tugging his own sleeve, he said: “I did not know how much like me he was until I watched him on television one day.”

In another interview, he cited the work of British psychologist Hans Eysenck, who said boys tend to follow their mothers, and daughters, their fathers.

“Loong is a different personality from me. He’s more, how would I say, equable – less intense than my daughter who takes after me,” he said.

As someone who believed deeply in the heritability of genes, it was a subject that intrigued him. However, others were probably more seized by the possibility that the father may have succeeded in transferring all of his political DNA to the son.

Do they share the same political values and instincts? Such questions have been aired in kopi-tiam circles as well as the conversations of the creme de la creme. At the heart of the fixation for some is the fear that the younger Lee would lack his father’s political strength and skill to do whatever had to be done. Others have the opposite fear, that should the time come for change, PM Lee would be unable to break free of his father’s legacy.

It is difficult to compare the two, given that they belong to very different periods. Although their years in Cabinet had an extraordinarily long overlap of 27 years, their premierships were separated by 14 years of the Goh Chok Tong administration.

The elder Mr Lee’s Singapore was associated with the drama of nation-building and high growth from a lower base. PM Lee’s is a more stable Singapore, but one that faces the challenges of a maturing economy and a more demanding electorate.

Despite the differences, such is the senior Mr Lee’s hold on people’s political imagination that the question continues to arise: How much has he passed on to his son?

While much has been written about PM Lee’s growing-up years, from their family holidays at Changi or Cameron Highlands or in Cambodia, to constituency visits, he has rarely spoken about the influence his father had in shaping his political beliefs, even though he is leading a movement founded by his father and his contemporaries.

During an interview in June 2013 – as concern grew about his father’s frail health nearing his 90th birthday that September – PM Lee reflected on the impact his father had on his life, the personal and the political.

Recalling his childhood, he remembered a father who, though not always physically present in the house, was well apprised of what was going on in their lives.

“He was a very strict, good father. He left a lot of the looking after of the family to my mother because he was always busy with politics and with his responsibilities,” said PM Lee. “But you knew he was there, you knew what he thought, you knew what he expected. Very strict. And if he disapproved of something, he didn’t have to say a lot, you knew it.”

The eldest of three children, PM Lee was born in 1952, two

years before the PAP was founded. His fondest childhood memories include the short holidays and relaxing activities they had as a family. He recalled that when he was five or six, he would go in the evenings to Tanglin Halt to look at the trains go by.

Holidays to Cameron Highlands were “a great thrill and outing for us”. He remembered the quaintness of breaking the journey in Kuala Lumpur and staying at the railway station’s hotel, which gave him a chance to look at the trains on the platform.

He also learnt to play golf with his father. “So, for quite a number of years, I would play with him, and he would take me around the course when we were on holiday or here at Sri Temasek and on the Istana course. And that was a chance to spend time with him and chat with him.”

As with traditional Asian families, hierarchy was respected and formalities observed. “He’s not very demonstrative. And our family generally is not very touchy-feely. But it’s a very deep respect and regard. He took us seriously and we held him in high respect. I think if you compare it with parents today and their children, they would describe it as a much more formal relationship.”

“Today, I think people are much looser in the way you treat your parents, what they say, argue they think, how you would what with them. With us, well, we were a different generation.”

As children of the Prime Minister, they were expected to behave properly and not throw their weight around. They were not under pressure to excel in school, although all three did. “I was not the top student in the class or in the school. But as long as you’re doing your best and you’re managing, well, they were okay,” he said.

If the children had an interest in something, the parents would help them pursue it. He himself, for example, decided to learn music after picking up a recorder bought for one of his siblings. From learning to read music, he decided to play the clarinet in the band and, later, the tuba. But there was no pressure to go through the hoops of examinations to polish his skills.

“In that way, it was a relaxed family. But they expected us to behave well and speak properly, not sloppily, use correct language and

no bad language. I think those are things that they are stricter about than many parents today,” he said.

Both parents stuck to a policy of not interfering with their children’s own families.

However, the father did pen words of advice to his two sons when they got married.

“It’s advice on how to have a happy marriage, speaking from his own personal experience. He took a lot of trouble keeping in touch with us. When we were away, he would write to us. And my mother would write to us every week. And I would write back,” recalled PM Lee.

His mother’s letters were handwritten whereas his father’s were typewritten. “His letter would be dictated, typed, and then it’s typed double or triple space, and then he would go through and correct the typed version, and then add stuff and maybe have another paragraph or two at the end in writing, and then he would send it to me in that form. To think of the effort... substantial pieces, maybe five, six pages, maybe more. I still have them all stored away somewhere,” said PM Lee.

“I replied, also quite long letters, every week.” Personal tragedy struck PM Lee twice. In 1982, his first wife, Dr Wong Ming Yang, died from a heart attack. In 1992, when he was deputy prime minister, he fell ill with lymphoma. Recalling those life-changing events, he said of his father: “You depend on him for support.”

Asked about his bond with his father, he said: “When you need him, he was there. In a crisis, he was the key person in the family.” “If he hadn’t been my father, I might still have found my way into politics. Many of the other ministers and MPs have found their way in to politics without having had the PM for their father. Maybe if he hadn’t been my father, I might have felt less of a sense of respon-

sibility that I had to take this up and do it.”

Having seen his father put his life and soul into Singapore, he felt compelled to do the same.

“If it hadn’t been him and I had been carrying on with my life and you asked me to... well, I would say, let’s give it a try. It’s a challenge.

“But you won’t have that same deep feeling of what is involved and how much it can mean to you. But having seen him struggle with his languages, having seen him go on the constituency visits, having seen him recording Battle For Merger, slogging away, and the speeches and the rallies, and the persuasion and campaigning, you know what you are in for.”

“And you know what it’s about, which is an advantage but of course it also puts a greater burden on you in terms of what you expect of yourself and what others expect of you.”

Asked what his father thought of him, PM Lee was clear that he would not be burdened by that. “Not for me to judge,” he said simply. “I’m sure he believes that I can do better.”

PM Lee admitted readily that he is “temperamentally not like him”. “He’s a lot harder, more



1963: Despite his busy schedule, Mr Lee made it a point to take breaks in the middle of his work day to interact with his children (above).

They are seen here on a marine patrol boat on a Sunday family outing. From left: Hsien Loong, 11, Wei Ling, eight, Mr Lee, Hsien Yang, six, and Mrs Lee.

PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE LEE FAMILY

through what you need to get done. And there are a lot of very clever people in the world but not all clever people make good political leaders. In my father, we had, I think, a very exceptional combination.”

His father had an “instinctive ability” to read the political situation and to navigate a route to get the best for Singapore. “Whether you’re discussing National Service policy or whether you’re discussing getting the best terms for water or for railway land, well, to know how to put the argument across and make the deal which is in line with your overriding interest,” he said.

“I think he had that instinctively, partly the way he was born, partly the life he lived through, having to survive the Japanese Occupation, having to negotiate with the British, having to fight the communists. If he didn’t have those or didn’t develop those, he would not have survived them.”

Asked how they dealt with each other and what advice his father gave him when he became Prime Minister, PM Lee said: “I can’t remember anything specific which he said but I think it gave him a lot of satisfaction that the system of transition, of renewal, was working, that not only had he managed to hand over to a successor but his successor had succeeded, had worked up in a job, succeeded. And another transition had taken place to a third generation.

“Not just me but also my peers – George (Yeoh), Wong Kan Seng, Teo Chee Hean, Lim Hng Kiang and company. I think that was one of the most amazing things, that he could stay in Cabinet with his successors, and it was a valuable experience for the successors as well as for him.

“And I’ve talked to some other prime ministers who have had former prime ministers to live with and they tell me they cannot imagine how it can be that your predecessors are in Cabinet and you’re still managing. I said, well, we’re different from you. And my predecessors are different from your predecessors.”

It was possible because Mr Lee knew how to “guide without asserting his will in a hard way and he knew when to let things go and to take a new direction”. He went along with the younger leaders’ ideas and often pushed them to go further. But he had definite ideas on some issues, such as the greening of Singapore.

PM Lee recalled how, several years ago, the Istana staff wanted

to remove a few trees to improve visibility for security. “I was going to agree. And he sent me a note to say, are you sure you need to do this? Why don’t you leave it be? This place is green and we’ve made a point of making this place green. And you’ve got birds, you’ve got the wildlife, and you want to keep it like that. So in the end, I didn’t cut the trees down.”

Having watched his father at work over the years, what stood out was Mr Lee’s approach of unrelenting effort and the belief that things could be better. “Just watching him and the way he fought and he worked and he struggled with all the issues and challenges, I think that’s a great inspiration,” he said.

“Policies, you can understand, you can work out intellectually what is it that needs to be done. But to see him sweating away with his languages, particularly Mandarin, every day listening to the tape, having a teacher, then exercising; exercising while listening to the tape playing; getting the phrases, keeping the phrases, refreshing the phrases, studying, bringing the tutor home on weekends in the study; learning Mandarin, learning Hokkien, especially during the ‘60s. It’s a tremendous slog for him.

“And even until old age, he’s still taking lessons daily, still keeping the language alive because he’s made such a big effort, he doesn’t want to lose that. I think that’s an amazing personal example.”

In the course of many interventions throughout his life, the elder Mr Lee was most often reluctant to wrestle with the what-ifs and what-could-have-beens.



SEPT 16, 2001: At a family dinner, seated clockwise from Senior Minister Lee, are Mrs Lee, daughter Wei Ling, grand-daughter Li Xiuqi, younger son Hsien Yang, elder daughter-in-law Ho Ching and older son Hsien Loong. PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE LEE FAMILY



AUG 12, 2004 (right): Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew congratulating his son Lee Hsien Loong after he was sworn in as Singapore’s third Prime Minister at the Istana. MM Lee, who was Senior Minister, received his appointment as Minister Mentor from then President S R Nathan (far right). ST FILE PHOTOS

Lee Hsien Yang, 57, is Mr Lee Kuan Yew’s younger son and chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore

## Father gave advice but let us decide for ourselves

By CASSANDRA CHEW FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

MR LEE Hsien Yang was the son who chose not to follow his father’s footsteps into politics.

He did things his way and carved a career in the corporate world.

Not that his parents did not try to influence his choices along the way.

When he was picking a graduate school in the 1980s, he did not choose Harvard University, where his father spent a sabbatical in 1968 and elder brother Hsien Loong did his master’s in public administration.

In an attempt to persuade him, his parents sent him a series of articles about “how Harvard is a great institution” and “what it meant to be an alumnus”.

Hsien Yang, 57, chose to do a master’s degree in management at Stanford University instead.

He is the youngest of the Lee children, after Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, 63, and Dr Lee Wei Ling, 60, director of the National Neuroscience Institute.

He described his father as someone who followed what the three children did and gave advice on academic choices, for example, but left them to decide for themselves.

Hsien Yang was two years old when his father became the first Prime Minister of Singapore in 1959, and did not see much of him as a child.

The children would trail their father around the nine-hole Istana golf course in the evenings, and catch up on the day’s events over dinner in Oxley Road.

It was only during the family’s annual two-week vacations to Fraser’s Hill, Cameron Highlands and later Changi Cottage that they saw more of their father.

The parenting was left largely to Mrs Lee.

A conveyancing lawyer at the law firm Lee & Lee, which she co-founded with her husband and brother-in-law Dennis, she would go home at lunchtime to be with her children.

“I think the nature of conveyance work was much more predictable than litigation or corporate law, which can be very intense, so she was able to manage both her legal practice and the family,”



APRIL 4, 2013: Mr Lee Hsien Yang and his wife Lim Suet Fern, senior director of Stamford Law Corporation, attending the Singapore Business Awards at the Shangri-La’s Island Ballroom. BT FILE PHOTO

“POLITICS? NOT FOR ME

My father suggested it but I didn’t think it was something I wanted to do. Politics should be a calling. I’ve never seriously contemplated it. I don’t know why people think just because I am my father’s son, this had to be my destiny.

– Mr Lee Hsien Yang

father’s son, this had to be my destiny.”

There was some burden in being the son of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, he said.

“Some people will claim that I got the opportunities because I was who I was,” he said.

“I think I’ve earned them and worked very hard to earn them, which is what I think my parents would have expected.”

As a rule, he never brings up his association to his father.

“It irks me that in newspaper reports, even till today, when they mention me, they’ll mention that I’m the son of the former Prime Minister or the brother of the current Prime Minister.”

“How is that relevant to what I’m doing?”

Interviewed two years after his mother’s death on Oct 2, 2010, following a series of strokes that had left her unable to move or speak for two years, the grief he felt was still plain to see.

Tears welled up in his eyes as he recalled how surgery gave her a brief recovery but also left her in a locked-in state for far longer than anyone expected.

He said her illness and death took a great emotional toll on his father, whose health declined as he tried to cope with the loss of his wife of 63 years.

“I was never seriously contemplated it. I don’t know why people think just because I am my



SEPT 21, 1984: Brigadier-General Lee Hsien Loong, 32, at a military function (left) five days before he was introduced as a new PAP election candidate (right).



## FAMILY MAN

FEB 9, 2013: Mr Lee Kuan Yew with his youngest brother, Dr Lee Suan Yew, before the Lee family's Chinese New Year reunion dinner.



## THE LEE KUAN YEW I REMEMBER

General practitioner **Lee Suan Yew, 81**, is Mr Lee Kuan Yew's youngest brother

## My wonderful Big Brother

WITHOUT my Big Brother, I would not have done well enough in school to become a doctor. As a teenager, I

was more interested in watching boxing and wrestling matches on Saturday evenings. Schoolwork seemed dull in comparison.

But one day in 1950 when I was 17, Big Brother sat me down and asked what my plans were for my future. "Do you want to become a doctor or a lawyer?" he asked.

He was 10 years older and had just returned from England where he had been called to the Bar.

I told him I wanted to become a doctor.

He said: "That's good. But you're concentrating on your studies. You are spending your weekends enjoying, going out with your friends.

You want to go to England and become a doctor, you've got to really put your mind to it."

He was right. I needed to be more serious in my work if I wanted to take up medicine. That was an important message that I needed to hear, and I took it to heart.

In 1954, I got into Cambridge

University, where I studied medicine. While I was there, it was his words, not those of my parents, that echoed in my mind and kept me working hard in school. That helped me a lot. I became a general practitioner in 1968.

Although we were far apart in age, he had a strong influence over my life. During the war, he taught me

how to play chess. I developed a love for it and even became captain of the chess club at Anglo-Chinese School.

We had a school coach, but it was my brother who laid the groundwork for me. My team won the top chess competition against other schools and was awarded the Lee Geok Eng shield.

I was in my late teens when he started playing golf, and I followed him to the golf club.

He said: "Let me teach you some rudiments of golf. I think it will be good for you because in your old age, you can still play golf."

He was absolutely right. Looking back, it was Big Brother

who planted the seeds of the things I enjoy: chess when I was young and golf when I was older.

He also guided me along with good advice.

He was a wonderful brother and it was really the little things he did for my family that carried us through thick and thin.



FATHER, HUSBAND: The Lee family (left) relaxing with their black labrador Nikki on the verandah of their home at 38 Oxley Road in May 1965, and Mr Lee with wife Choo (above) at the Chinese New Year light-up in Chinatown along New Bridge Road on Jan 7, 2006. PHOTOS: LEE FAMILY, ST FILE

## LEE ON THE LOVE OF HIS LIFE

"Her last wish she shared with me was to enjoin our children to have our ashes placed together, as we were in life... I have precious memories of our 63 years together. Without her, I would be a different man, with a different life. She devoted herself to me and our children. She was always there when I needed her. She has lived a life full of warmth and meaning. I should find solace in her 89 years of life well lived. But at this moment of the final parting, my heart is heavy with sorrow and grief."

— Mr Lee's eulogy to his wife at her funeral on Oct 6, 2010

## Devoted husband and caring father

Close-knit family and a small circle of friends – these are the people who got to witness the tender, nurturing side of Lee Kuan Yew

By **ROBIN CHAN** and **SUMIKO TAN**  
DEPUTY EDITOR

LEE Kuan Yew was a man with few close friends. Those who knew him best and saw his tender, caring side came mainly from his tight family circle.

But others who interacted with him caught glimpses of the private man away from his public persona as Singapore's hard-driving, straight-talking first prime minister.

At home, he was ever the devoted son who cared deeply for his mother, Chua Jim Neo, even if he upset her once by cancelling her driving licence when he decided she had become too old to drive.

She was an English-speaking Straits Chinese matriarch famed for her Peranakan culinary skills who died in 1980, aged 75. He greatly admired her for standing up to her temperamental, more carefree husband in order to keep the family finances healthy and raise her children properly.

He was close to his father, Lee Chin Koon, who worked at the Shell oil company first as a storekeeper, then later in charge of various depots in Malaysia, and had a love for card games. He was 94 when he died in 1997.

Mr Lee had three younger brothers and a sister who looked up to him and had regarded him as the man of the house during long periods when their father was away. "He was a wonderful big brother because he was responsible, caring, and when we were young, he'd give us good advice," said his youngest sibling, Dr Lee Suan Yew.

Mr Lee had two sons and a daughter, whose achievements he was proud of. "He was not a demonstrative person, which was common with many of his generation," said younger son Hsien Yang.

Most of all, though, he was a

was a banker at the Oversea-Chinese Banking Corporation and a Java-born Chinese like Mr Lee's father and paternal grandmother. Her mother was a Straits-born Nonya, like his own mother.

His path crossed again in Raffles College when she caught his attention after she outscored him in both the English and economics exams.

Their education was interrupted by World War II. By chance, he knew her brother-in-law Yong Nyuk Lin, and while the two men ran a small business making stationery gum during the Japanese Occupation, he and Choo developed a relationship.

After the war, he decided not to return to Raffles College and compete for the Queen's Scholarship. Instead, he went to London and sought admission into the law faculty of the London School of Economics. He later transferred to Cambridge University.

By the time he set sail for Britain in 1946, he and Choo were sweethearts and had pledged their love to each other. The next year, she won the Queen's Scholarship and he helped her get a place to study law in Cambridge too.

"My greatest joy was when my wife won the Queen's Scholarship and I managed to get her into Cambridge immediately after that, because that meant she didn't have to wait for me for three or four years in Singapore," he would say later.

They married secretly in beautiful Stratford-upon-Avon in December 1947 and spent many happy days in Britain. She wore his ring as a necklace pendant. Their "official wedding" in Singapore took place in September 1950, when they returned with their degrees.

Mrs Lee was a working mother, an astute woman and a good judge of people. She was not one to mimic her words, but had a kind heart. Former minister Othman Wok described her as "the refriger-

erator to cool his fiery gas cooker personality".

Prof Koo recalled Istana private dinners where Mr Lee would sometimes get excited about an issue. If she felt he needed to calm down, Mrs Lee would just say: "Harry." And that was that.

"Mrs Lee had tremendous influence on him on the good side. She tempered his mood," said Prof Koo.

Professor Chan Heng Chee, Singapore's former ambassador to the United States who accompanied the Lees on overseas trips in the 1990s when he was senior minister and later minister mentor, recalled a couple very much in sync.

"They were always bantering and communicating with each other, and he was very courteous to her," Prof Chan said.

Mrs Lee, in turn, watched over his health like a hawk. "She always told me, don't overwork. MM – I tended to pack his schedule – and he would wave her off and say, 'It's okay, Choo.'"

Dr Lee Suan Yew recalled meal-times with his brother and sister-in-law. "When it came to dessert, he had a soft spot for chocolate cake and Mrs Lee, in her diplomatic way, would say, 'Oh Harry, I'll have half of that'."

He couldn't say no. So he would say, "OK, OK, you take half." What she was trying to do was to cut down his weight and calories."

But he did not always heed his wife's efforts to watch what he ate. Former Cabinet minister Yeo Cheow Tong remembered an overseas trip when the Singapore delegation was at a dinner and Mrs Lee said before leaving the group: "Harry, remember, no ice cream."

After she was gone and the waiters came to ask about dessert, Mr Lee said: "I might as well have my ice cream now."

Mr Yeo said: "We all laughed. It showed that he was very human. They were very close, and you could see their relationship, they were very relaxed, and because of her, he was relaxed with me. She spoke in very easy tones, so whenever she was around, the staff felt relieved. She brought out

the softer side in him."

Dr Lee said that after Mrs Lee fell ill and was bedridden, Mr Lee made it a point to read to her her favourite poems and books every night. "We'd have dinner together. At 10 o'clock he'd look at his watch and say, 'Sorry, I have to leave you all now. I am going to read to Choo.' That was very touching. It happened many times," he said.

For instance, the family had a longstanding connection with Harvard, with my father and older siblings having spent time there.

There was more than a nudge that I should attend post-graduate school at Harvard, consistent with family tradition. However, I chose to go to Stanford, and he eventually became a huge admirer of the university."

Mr Lee was close to his eldest grandson Yipeng, whom he called "good-natured, and the best-behaved and most likeable" of his seven grandchildren. Yipeng, who has albinism, is Hsien Loong's eldest son.

As the grandchildren got older, some would engage him on his favourite subject – politics – over Sunday lunch. But overall, he tried not to interfere in their lives beyond asking about school and what they were doing.

"My wife decided early on that she will not quarrel with her in-laws or her daughters-in-law," he once said. "The children are their responsibility. We just take them out for outings."

Resuming her education after World War II, Monica was not keen to persevere but he insisted that she should at least finish her senior Cambridge. She did so and went on to marry businessman George Chan, who died in 2012.

Dr Lee said of his "Big Brother": "He was very responsible. We always felt that if you wanted to ask for advice, he was the right person to go to."

The siblings remember Mr Lee as a stickler for cleanliness and neatness even as a boy, and having a quick temper like their father. Both recalled, separately, an unfortunate incident when Dennis used a pair of his eldest brother's slippers without permission. Mr Lee had a habit of sticking his slippers neatly at the front

Said Hsien Yang: "At key junctures, he would give advice on what he thought we should do in terms of academic choices. But we were left to make the decisions ourselves, though we were probably nudged along. Sometimes the nudging worked, and sometimes it didn't!"

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## The big brother

IF THERE was a circle of trust beyond his wife and children, it was formed by his brothers and sister – Dennis, a founding partner of law firm Lee & Lee, who died in 2012.

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FINAL FAREWELL: Mr Lee kissed his fingers and placed them on his wife's cheeks twice as she lay in her casket at Mandai Crematorium. She died on Oct 2, 2010.

sister will not let me down."

Monica and Dr Lee remember him as the caring eldest brother who was bright and enterprising through their growing up years and the Japanese Occupation, and who helped his siblings make their career choices.

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of the house. One day, he came home to find his slippers not only missing from their usual spot but also strewn inside the house – and dirty.

"He went berserk. He said, 'You used my shoes and made it dirty!'," recalled Dr Lee with a laugh. "You see, Dennis was more chin-chye (easygoing). They didn't come to blows but he showed his anger. He was really annoyed – very, very annoyed."

Over the decades, the Lee siblings remained close and met regularly. When their father was alive, the extended family would gather at Oxley Road for the first day of Chinese New Year. But as the family grew bigger, they got together for the reunion dinner and exchanged greetings then.

Monica said her eldest brother stayed protective of his younger siblings over the years. But he had his quirks too. "LKY shared my mother's appreciation for the way European women looked well-groomed and he was particular about the way I dressed, as I

was his only sister," she said.

"Whenever he found my dressing to be too shabby, he would ask me, 'You don't have enough money to buy clothes?' He expected me to look polished, with no exception."

One Chinese New Year, however, she wore a pair of dangling diamond earrings her mother had given her for her wedding.

"The moment LKY saw me, he exclaimed with obvious disdain, 'What on earth have you got on?' He found them far too flashy. It was all I needed to leave those earrings at home for good. I reset the diamonds onto a brooch."

He himself was a man of simple tastes in dressing, and from the 1960s his work shirts were from the CYC custom-made shirt shop. Managing director Fong Loo Fern said Mr Lee's favourite colour was pink, but patterned fabric was "very unlikely".

He wasn't very concerned about what he wore. Mrs Lee always took care of all that," she said.

Once asked by a journalist how long he had owned a jacket he wore to many interviews, Mr Lee said it was almost 20 years old. "It's a very comfortable jacket," he said. "The man who tailored it for me is dead."

## Beyond the family

MR LEE did not have a wide circle of close friends. From his Raffles College days, there were two. Dr Fong Kim Heng, a former MP, was a classmate whom he brought to the Chinese New Year, and the two would chat about their families and growing old.

He became fast friends with Mr Hon Sui Sen during the Japanese Occupation. They and their families remained close. Mr Hon became finance minister and died in 1983 at age 67.

Mr Yong Pung How attended Cambridge with the Lees, and shared his notes with Mr Lee for a term he had missed. He was later persuaded by Mr Lee to become chief justice. Mr Lee said: "They are not friends I make to get advantage out of. They are friends because we spent time together,

we found each other agreeable and we maintained the friendship."

That sense of friendship and the importance of relationships came across to Mr Ng Kok Song, former chief investment officer at the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation (GIC). "I think he cared deeply about people. But as a leader he had to take tough decisions, always facing reality," said Mr Ng, who taught Mr Lee how to meditate.

"From time to time in the GIC, we would deal with certain investment matters that involved past relationships with business leaders, or with families."

"He would tell me, 'Always honour your friendship with people, never forget your friends, the people who helped you when you were down, when you were never as fortunate. Never forget that.'"

"And I have seen in action, time and again, when we had to deal with business matters that involved past relationships, he would always emphasise the importance of honouring that relationship."

Mr Lee was not one for hobbies. He had long given up golf, and said he had no time for movies. "Some people collect watches, shoes, pens, rare books, art but... he never did," said Hsien Yang. "Material things never enticed or interested him."

In fact, he had no concept of how much even basic items cost. "He didn't go to the supermarket or the shops, he did not buy things, he used his clothes till they were old, and then some more, and was extremely thrifty, so he had no reference point," said Hsien Yang. "Until very recently, he didn't know what his financial position was. For a very long time, I just kept an eye and watched his finances for him. He was not bothered or interested in money or material things."

Mr Lee was once asked in an interview what he thought of how others perceived him. He replied: "They think they know me. But they only know the public me."

Asked if he ever felt like giving it all up – the politics, the struggles, the critics – he replied: "No, this is a lifelong commitment. 'What are the things important to me in my life? My family and my country.'"

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Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015



## LIFE AFTER MRS LEE

## Wife's death left a void in his life

By **CASSANDRA CHEW**  
FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

FOR a week after his wife died, Mr Lee Kuan Yew fussed over her photographs on the wall of the living room at their Oxley Road home.

He placed pictures of their favourite moments together at the foot of his bed and by the treadmill which he used every day. A few days later, he would move them around again.

He repositioned his grey plastic chair at the dining table to have the best view of her pictures on the wall. As he ate his dinner, he listened to classical music, which she enjoyed – her favourite composer was Johann Sebastian Bach.

But nothing seemed to comfort Mr Lee in the days after Madam Kwa Geok Choo, his wife of 63 years, his best friend and confidante, died on Oct 2, 2010.

Sometimes, the food went down his windpipe, causing infection in his lungs that led to pneumonia, said his son Hsien Yang.

Nonetheless, he looked forward to meals and outings around Singapore, hosted by his wife's niece and some of his younger friends. Visits to the Marina Barrage and the Changi Jewel project were among his favourites.

Later, as it became harder for him to swallow, his home meals became simpler and more bland. He ate mostly fish, tofu or chicken porridge with a ginseng drink, and a scoop of frozen yoghurt or ice cream for dessert.

Sometimes, the food went down his windpipe, causing infection in his lungs that led to pneumonia, said his son Hsien Yang.

Nonetheless, he looked forward to meals and outings around Singapore, hosted by his wife's niece and some of his younger friends. Visits to the Marina Barrage and the Changi Jewel project were among his favourites.

He was diagnosed in 2009 with sensory peripheral neuropathy, a rare nerve disease which made his walking unsteady. To give his balance a boost, he underwent regular rounds of intravenous immunoglobulin infusions, which infused antibodies into the bloodstream through the veins.

His brother Suan Yew said this was meant to overcome the damaging effects of the disease on his nerves.

On Feb 16, 2013, one of his security officers noticed that one side of Mr Lee's body had gone limp and alerted his daughter Wei Ling, a neurologist. He was admitted to the Singapore General Hospital for a suspected episode of transient ischaemic attack.

A prolonged bout of irregular heartbeats had probably resulted in a small blood clot which travelled to his brain. He was discharged on a Sunday, and returned to his office the next day.

MR LEE'S health meant he had to keep his public and constituency engagements to a minimum.

But he never missed the annual tree planting in his constituency, from 1963 till the most recent Tree Planting Day last November.

The crowd cheered when he appeared for the National Day Parade last August.

On Nov 7 last year, he attended the People's Action Party's 60th-anniversary celebrations at the Victoria Concert Hall, and received a standing ovation as he took to the stage. Sometimes he would continue with his Mandarin lessons even when he was in hospital.

Throughout, Mr Lee kept up his Mandarin lessons, and continued his exercises and outings. Tiam, as his daughter once described him in an article, is light but strong. It can bend a little, but it will not snap unless it is under overwhelming force, she wrote.

On Feb 5, he was admitted to the Singapore General Hospital, this time with severe pneumonia. News in mid-March that he was critically ill saw an outpouring of good wishes across the island he loved and called home.

AFTER Mrs Lee died, elder son Hsien Loong, the Prime Minister,



## FAMILY MAN

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015

Mr Lee's sister Monica says he was always coming up with clever solutions to family problems, and "we could always count on him to take care of us". ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

## THE LEE KUAN YEW I REMEMBER

Monica Lee, 85, is Mr Lee Kuan Yew's only sister

## Brother used his wits to help family

ONE of my mother's favourite stories of LKY was about the time she taught him his ABCs.

In those days, colourful alphabet toys were not available, so my mother made her own by cutting out letters from The Straits Times' headlines. She said she showed the alphabet to LKY only once and when she shuffled the letters, my brother –

who was just a few years old – managed to put all the letters back in the right order.

It was then, my mother said, that she realised how smart LKY was. And from then on, she always told him: "You have to be a lawyer!" Maybe that was partly why he took up law. He was also made for it because he was very good at debates in school, at arguments.

He had a very sharp mind and was always coming up with clever solutions whenever the family found itself in a fix.

When the Japanese invaded

Singapore on Feb 8, 1942, my mother's biggest worry was whether we would have enough to eat.

LKY knew the Japanese soldiers would scrounge around, so he devised a way to keep our rice safe at our Norfolk Road home.

It was common then for homes to have earthenware jars filled with sand to put out fires if there was an air raid. He took these jars and filled them instead with rice. Then he covered the grains with newspapers or cloth, and put sand at the very top of the jars. This made it look as though the jars were filled with sand.

His ingenious method of hiding our rice in plain sight helped tide us through a good part of the four-year war. We could always count on him to take care of us.

He always wanted to do things perfectly, and if something had to be done, it had to be done right now with no delays. The Lee family is a little bit hot-tempered on my father's side. Those on my mother's side are very quiet and patient.

I remember when my second brother Dennis wanted to go to university in America in 1949, LKY did not approve. He was in

Cambridge and wanted to make sure Dennis would find a steady job when he came home.

So LKY wrote to my mother and said: "I don't want that boy fooling around in America. I will make him come over to Cambridge and do law."

Sure enough, Dennis did law at Cambridge as instructed. Six years later in 1955, they started their own law practice with Mrs Lee, called Lee and Lee.

He always cared about us. As we got older, he turned his concern towards my health and well-being. If he saw I was sad or didn't look well,

he would summon me to his office to find out why.

Both of us suffered from the same illnesses. We both had pacemakers and sensitive skin and were allergic to the same things. We lost two brothers younger than him – Dennis at 77 in 2003 and Freddy at 85 in 2012. He wanted to make sure Suan Yew, who is 81, and I did not go before he did.

With only three of us left in the family, LKY, Suan and I made it a point to see one another more regularly. We met for Japanese cuisine, which LKY enjoyed.

When it came to food, the taste my

brother missed most was that of my mother's famous Nonya cooking. We all do.

So when he started losing weight after Mrs Lee died in 2010, he called me, saying: "I have lost 2½ pounds. What can you teach the maid so I can gain the weight back?"

His maid came to my Morley Road home and I taught her a few of my mother's recipes. His favourites were rojak, mee siam, satay and gado gado.

To whet his appetite, I presented the dishes on special plates I had hand-carried from Italy, with fruit in the middle and vegetables on the side.

He got so excited that he called out to his daughter Wei Ling: "See what your Gu Ma ("auntie" in Mandarin) has done. Come and join me!"

Sometimes, he would want to eat desserts, tiramisu or caramel pudding or soufflé. If I'd forgotten how to do it, I'd tell my cook. "Let's have a rehearsal, it's been 30 years since I made tiramisu and soufflé."

Well, he liked my cooking, that's for sure. I do a lot of cooking for my family; my kitchen is like a 24-hour coffee house. The Nonya families are all like that, they always have food ready for visitors, friends and family.

## DIFFERENT DISPOSITION

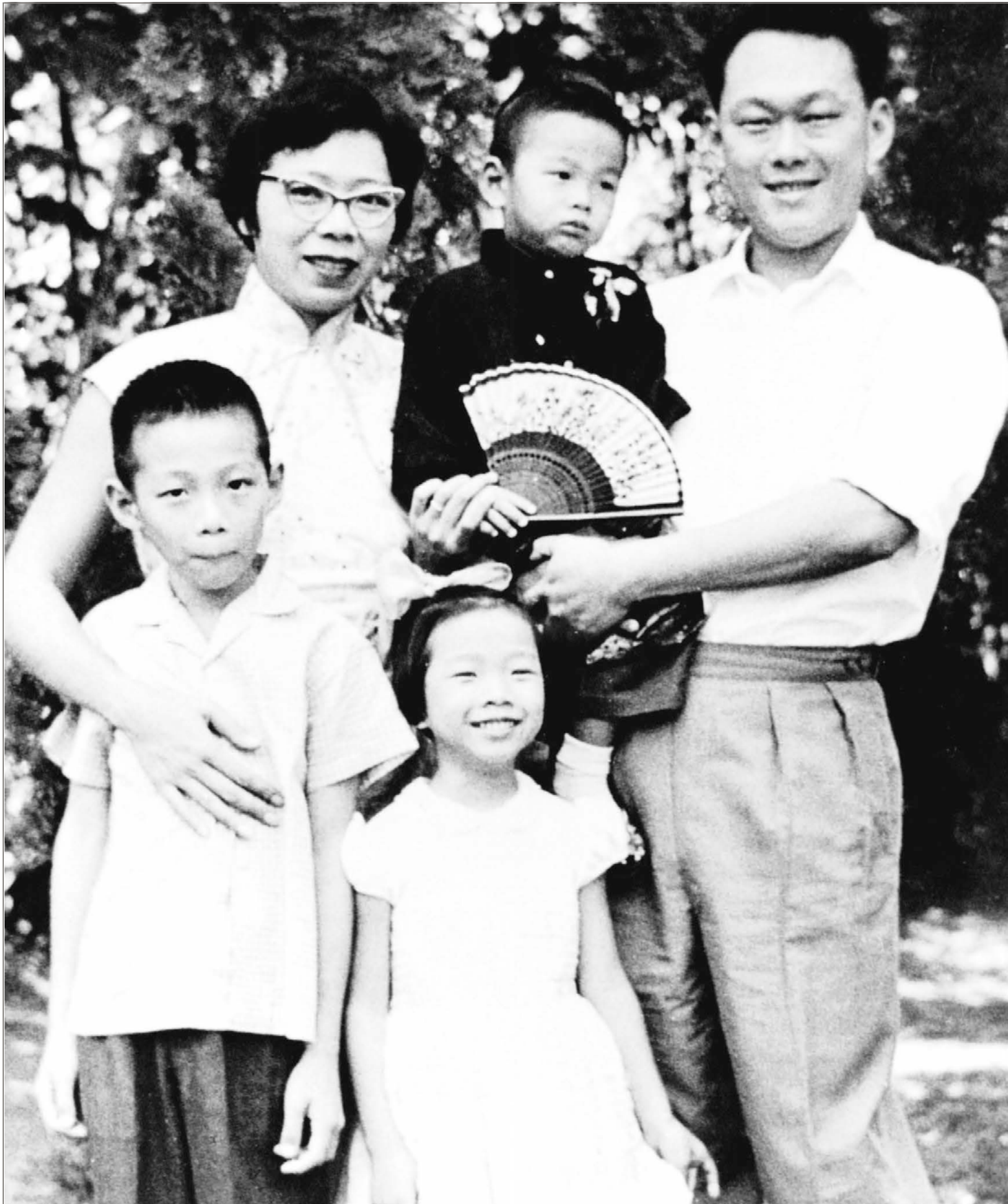
"Loong is a different personality from me. He's more, how would I say, equable – less intense than my daughter who takes after me. Ling is very intense... She gravitated to an activist role... She should have married and had two children, then things would have happened differently. But what to do? She was happy as she was, so that's that. They lead their own lives."

– Mr Lee, in *Hard Truths*

ONE FOR THE FAMILY ALBUM (right): Mr and Mrs Lee with their young family during Chinese New Year in February 1960. Clockwise, from left are Hsien Loong, eight, Hsien Yang, two, and Wei Ling, five.

CAMBRIDGE DAYS (far right): While they were studying in England in 1947, Mr Lee and Miss Kwa married in secret. They exchanged vows officially again in Singapore in 1950. It was in his beloved Choo that Mr Lee found his intellectual equal and soulmate, someone he trusted completely. He, in turn, was at the centre of everything she did.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF LEE KUAN YEW



THREE'S COMPANY (left): Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong with his parents Lee Kuan Yew and Kwa Geok Choo at a Special Appreciation Dinner to honour 24 retired Members of Parliament on July 22, 2006. Mr Lee described eldest child Hsien Loong, who became Prime Minister in 2004, as having the best mix of both his and Mrs Lee's genes. In daughter Wei Ling, he saw his fierce temperament. He described Hsien Yang as "sensible and practical". ST FILE PHOTO

DOTING GRANDPARENTS (above): Mr and Mrs Lee – with grandsons (from left) Hsien Yang, a few months old; Shengwu, four; Hsuanwu, three; and Hongyi, two, in 1989 – had six grandsons and a granddaughter. Mr Lee said: "My wife decided early on that she will not quarrel with her in-laws or her daughters-in-law. The children are their responsibility. We just take them out for outings." PHOTO: COURTESY OF THE LEE FAMILY

## Special CNY visit to Uncle Harry's

Joan Hon, 72, is a retired teacher and daughter of the late finance minister Hon Sui Sen

I HAVE visited Uncle Harry every Chinese New Year for as long as I can remember.

But it was my visit in 2010 that I will never forget.

It started out like any other visit to Oxley Road on the fourth day of the new year. I was joined by my younger sister Brenda and her son Max.

Max was then working for local technology company Xmi which designed the now widely recognisable donut-shaped X-mini portable speakers. So after all the social niceties, Max presented one of the speakers to Uncle Harry as a gift.

He opened the little box and we stuck the little speaker into his handphone and the sound came out loud and clear.

Then he wanted to try it on his computer. So we went into his study to plug it in, and out came the "eehs" and "aahs" of his Mandarin lessons.

He liked it very much and was proud of the fact that it was made in Singapore.

He said: "Careful, don't let the Chinese copy you."

Max replied: "Too late, copied already!"

We chatted a little more, before he asked: "Would you like



to see Auntie Choo?"

She was in the bedroom next door. Unable to speak or move since her last stroke, Auntie Choo was lying motionless in a hospital bed, with her eyes rolled back and a tube in her nose.

He said: "Choo, Ah Fong and Keat are here to see you."

Uncle Harry and Auntie Choo were the only two people outside my family who called me by my Chinese name, Fui Fong. Keat is my sister's name.

They were familiar people to all of us.

Uncle Harry was always bouncing his theories and ideas off my father Hon Sui Sen, whom he persuaded after 10 years to enter politics.

Auntie Choo, on the other



hand, would set aside stamps for me because she knew I collected them.

The writer Joan Hon (left) as a young girl with (above, from left) former diplomat Maurice Baker, her father and former finance minister Hon Sui Sen, and Mr Lee Kuan Yew in 1946. PHOTOS: COURTESY OF JOAN HON, ST FILE

But I never really knew Uncle Harry beyond the superficial chit-chat we were used to having in his living room.

So when he took us into his bedroom to see Auntie Choo that day, it felt as though we were entering the holy of holies.

It was his most private space, and he had let us, the children of his old friends, in.

I said a prayer for Auntie Choo. She died on Oct 2 that year.

## Tender side that not many see

Ng Kok Song, 67, is the former chief investment officer of Government of Singapore Investment Corporation

WHEN my wife Patricia was diagnosed with stage four stomach cancer in July 2003, I saw a side of Mr Lee Kuan Yew that not many see.

Two weeks after the diagnosis, Patricia told me she was going to write a letter to Mr Lee, who was then Senior Minister. It had nothing to do with my job, she said, but my job was to deliver it. This is what she wrote:

"Dear SM Lee,

When National Day approaches each year, I feel fortunate and blessed to live in Singapore. And I've always wanted to express my deep gratitude to you, but lacked the courage to do so. Now I feel a sense of urgency as this may be my last National Day, as I have recently been diagnosed with advanced stomach cancer."

On this auspicious occasion of the 38th birthday of Singapore, I thank God that we have been blessed with a leader who has a gifted vision, and the courage, will and ability to make his dream a reality. I have the deepest respect and admiration for you and regard you as truly the Father of our Nation.

My husband Kok Song and I raised three children in our 31 years of married life, and we are all proud to be Singaporeans. Happy National Day.

Yours respectfully,  
Patricia."

Four days later, Mr Lee replied, thanked her for her letter and said:



Senior Minister Lee and Mr Ng at the opening of the Government of Singapore Investment Corporation's new office on May 22, 2001. Mr Lee's letter to Mr Ng's wife Patricia showed he was a man with a tender heart". SPH FILE PHOTO

"I am grateful and deeply moved that you wrote this letter at a time when you are burdened with the thought of leaving your loved ones behind. I have heard from my son Hsien Loong that Kok Song's wife had been diagnosed with stomach cancer. Three children, two grown up, and one still a minor. I am sad at this cruel act of fate."

"I understand how you and your family must feel. My family experienced it when we were told that Hsien Loong himself was diagnosed with cancer of the lymphatic glands. It was a traumatic blow. It is so unfair.

One small consolation is that modern medicine can make your suffering less unbearable. My wife and I send you and your family our sympathy.

Understanding and support, Kok Song will need them most of all. I have no words to describe our sadness, or to comfort him, your family, your daughters and you."

He wrote once more to Patricia, saying: "Many things in life can make or unmake a person. But the single most important factor is that someone who shares your life with you. In that respect, my wife and I have been very fortunate. We are happy for you, Patricia, that you have a soulmate in your husband Kok Song. It is a relationship that evolves with time and circumstance, and grows with age."

I am sharing this exchange of letters because I think the way Patricia felt is probably how my generation, and maybe the older generation, felt about Mr Lee.

We are proud to be Singaporeans because of what he did for Singapore. He gave us hope when the future was bleak. When we separated from Malaysia, he inspired us to believe in ourselves, to defy the odds to prosper economically as an independent country."

But another thing that came out from those letters is that while Mr Lee can come across as a stern person, you can feel from the way he responded to Patricia's letter that he is a man with a tender heart.

Soon after, Mrs Lee had a stroke and was bedridden. Patricia lived on for another 19 months.

During that time, he always asked about Patricia, telling me to tell her: "Don't give up. Soldier on."

Once he said to me: "Now we are in the same boat. You are looking after your wife and I am looking after my wife."

I had begun meditating with him. One evening in 2011, after our session, I asked him about rumours swirling that he was very ill, when he was actually perfectly all right.

"Don't you think the Government should put out a statement to rebut the rumours that you are seriously ill in hospital?" I asked.

He looked at me and said: "No, no, Kok Song, there's no point. Because one day it is going to happen."

Then he added: "I have lived such a long life. I hope that I can live on for maybe another five to seven years. By then, the Marina Bay developments would be completed, the water barrage would be operating, the whole Tanjong Pagar area and the reservoir will be finished. And our entire landscape will be changed. The city is going to be so beautiful."

He was always looking forward to Singapore's future progress.

It was as though he had captured all this in his imagination, and just hoped he would be able to see it before he passed on.



## THE MAN AND HIS IDEAS

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015

The Presidential Standard at the Istana flying at half-mast yesterday. The red flag with a crescent moon and five stars is flown from the highest point on the Istana main building. PHOTO: FACEBOOK PAGE OF PM LEE HSIEN LOONG

# The original big-idea leader

His enduring legacy was that he had powerful ideas for Singapore and the courage and commitment to turn them into reality

By **HAN FOOK KWANG**  
EDITOR AT LARGE

I HAVE done several books on Lee Kuan Yew but there was one which never saw the light of day. It was tentatively titled Lee Kuan Yew: What Keeps Him Awake At Night.

I had wanted to do it after one discussion with him in early 2002 when he spoke forcefully about the threat of global terrorism after the September 2001 attacks on the United States. He saw the impending war between the West and Al-Qaeda in almost apocalyptic Cold War terms and was especially concerned about how it would affect Muslim countries in our region.

When I sent him an outline of the book, which would include other issues confronting Singapore, such as the competition from China, he had one question: What if what he had to say was so dark and gloomy that it demoralised Singaporeans and hastened their emigration?

In the end, he decided against doing the book, preferring to keep those ominous thoughts to himself.

But he was wrong on global terrorism and it didn't turn out the way he feared, not yet at least.

Mr Lee was not right on everything and his critics will say he was wrong on many.

But it didn't matter to him. He was not in it to win arguments though he was famously adept at it because he was not above intimidating his opponents into submission.

He was in it to ensure Singapore survived and prospered against the odds.

And on this, he was willing to take on all comers.

Mr Lee's achievements are well known and the accolades will pour in over the next few days: He transformed Singapore from Third World to the modern thriving city it is now and uplifted the lives of an entire generation.

What accounts for his extraordinary success? There are many

reasons, and entire books have been written about the man.

For me, his enduring legacy was that he had big ideas for Singapore and he wasn't afraid to implement them.

It is fashionable today to say that it was easier for the government in the early years to implement its policies because life was simpler and the people easier to govern.

Those who say this forget how improbable the undertakings must have seemed at the time.

How large and incredible?

He wanted to solve the entire housing problem by building public flats for more than 85 per cent of the people, most of whom had never owned a roof over their heads.

He wanted every male citizen to serve in the army for at least two of their best years, most of whom had never touched a rifle before.

He wanted to bring in foreign multinational companies here when most people believed they would exploit workers for their own profit.

He wanted to eradicate corruption in a country sitting in the middle of a region in which it was endemic.

He wanted to make English the common language when most of the people then couldn't string a complete sentence together.

He wanted to build an improbable nation of disparate people with different cultures, languages and religions.

Any one of these projects alone would have required a lifetime of courage and commitment. But do them all together?

Mr Lee took all of them on soon after Singapore was expelled from Malaysia, and he was fortunate to have had a unique team led by his deputy, the late Dr Goh Keng Swee.

Seen in today's context when many governments lack the vision and energy to do the really bold things, what he did seems larger than life.

What made him embark on

such wholesale changes in such rapid fashion?

Perhaps it had to do with becoming the leader at a relatively young age – he was prime minister of independent Singapore at 42.

That's when most promising People's Action Party politicians today are being inducted into gov-

ernment as acting junior ministers still wet behind their ears.

But it is one thing to have big ideas, quite another to be able to carry them out.

That required another big idea: Near total control of all the important levers of power, including Parliament, the media, the educational institutions and large parts of the economy.

He set out to achieve this domination with his trademark determination. When I asked him in an interview for the book Lee Kuan Yew: The Man And His Ideas how he would describe himself, he singled this out as his most distinctive trait: "I'm very determined. If I decide that something is worth doing, then I'll put my heart and soul to it. The whole ground can be against me but if I know it is right, I'll do it."

Singaporeans knew exactly what he meant because they felt the force of his conviction and personality over a lifetime.

From the interactions I had had with him over the course of writing those books, he was more intense than anyone I've met. There was never any small talk and he was always trying to win you over to his point of view.

But this desire for control also made him the target of much criticism. His detractors say he overdid it and stymied Singapore's development as a progressive society in step with its economic progress.

Could he have loosened the tight rein he held for so long?

With the benefit of hindsight, the loosening up we are seeing today could have taken place earlier.

Only Mr Lee, given his enormous influence even when he was no longer prime minister, could have initiated a move to open up the political space in line with changing expectations.

Then the younger leaders would have a longer time to develop the instincts and reflexes needed to respond to a more diverse electorate who want a more competitive political landscape.

As it is, the current leaders have had to play catch-up and have yet to develop the skills to operate effectively in the new environment.

But if Mr Lee was a bulldozer, it was a values-driven one.

He liked to say that he was a pragmatist, that for him what mattered was whether it worked.

It isn't strictly true. When he embarked on those large undertakings, they were driven by what he personally believed in.

Why does everyone need to own a home? Because if every Singaporean has one, he has a vested interest in the stability and prosperity of this place.

Why is public welfare kept to a minimum? So as to encourage self-reliance and hard work.

Why does Singapore need to be so tightly governed? Because only the best should govern this exceptionally vulnerable country.

Even in his last years, he tried to ensure these views would prevail when he set them down in the book Hard Truths.

Pragmatic policies can be copied by future generations if what matters is only whether an idea works.

But the values that define a society are much more complex. They need to be worked at, even fought over and eventually embraced by the people.

Mr Lee shaped Singapore not just through the policies he pursued but also through the values he believed in.

But when circumstances change as they have done in Singapore, what happens to those governing principles? Should they change, or are they permanent because the fundamentals that shape Singapore have not changed?

These questions won't matter to him now, but they will for his successors.

Will the post-Lee era bring forth big ideas on this values front?

By another big-idea leader? Singapore awaits.

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## LEE KUAN YEW: A tribute

■ Get the latest updates in our live blog on the website

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