



ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM

A vigil orderly helping to wipe the tears of one of the vigil guards for Mr Lee Kuan Yew at Parliament House yesterday. Over the past four days, about 450,000 people queued for up to 10 hours to pay their respects to Mr Lee.

"The response from all segments of our society, everybody, has been overwhelming. It's extraordinary. Deeply moving. It's a tremendous, unique experience for Singaporeans."

PM LEE, on the outpouring of tributes for his late father, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, in Singapore and abroad

## Final journey through Singapore for Mr Lee today

**Zakir Hussain**  
Deputy Political Editor

The endless queue of visitors lining up to pay their respects to the country's founding Prime Minister was finally closed last night, setting the stage for Singapore to give Mr Lee Kuan Yew a final farewell today.

Some 1,000 Singapore Armed Forces servicemen were deployed to clear the Padang. Their task was to work through the night to dismantle 360 tents and shift 2,000 barricades so that four ceremonial 25-pounder Howitzer guns can be moved onto the Padang for a 21-gun salute.

The Padang and City Hall provide a fitting stage for the nation to give a solemn send-off to Mr Lee, who died on Monday, aged 91.

It is the site of many a historic event in this nation's past – the declaration of self-government in 1959, the introduction of the national flag, anthem and state crest later that year, the announcement of Singapore's independence in 1965 and the first National Day Parade a year later.

Mr Lee himself was instrumental in those moments.

Over the past four days, some 450,000 people queued for up to 10 hours to pay their respects in person to Mr Lee.

Another million people had visited 18 community tribute sites islandwide by 9pm yesterday.

Today, many will line the streets around the Padang and down Shenton Way to Tanjong Pagar, Bukit Merah, Queenstown and Commonwealth as a ceremonial gun carriage makes its journey to the University Cultural Centre (UCC) in Clementi for Mr Lee's state funeral service.

Mr Lee's funeral will also be marked abroad, with India and New Zealand flying their flags at half-mast today.

The state funeral procession will begin at 12.30pm, when Mr Lee's casket will be carried onto a ceremonial gun carriage and transported out of Parliament House in a solemn procession.

The cortege will make its way to Parliament Place, and as it journeys around the Padang, the Republic of Singapore Air Force's Black Knights will do an aerial salute.

### Crowds gone, Padang cleared last night for funeral procession



ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI

Madam Eliza Wong, in her 50s, was one of the last visitors to make it to the queue to Parliament House when the entrance was sealed at 8pm yesterday. She said: "Mr Lee means so much to all of us. He is the father of Singapore."

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Two navy patrol vessels will conduct a ceremonial sailpast at sea off Marina Barrage and sound three prolonged horn blasts as the procession passes the Padang.

The cortege will then travel past the new and old National Trades Union Congress buildings, where thousands of workers will gather to bid farewell to Mr Lee, who began his career fighting for trade unions.

Mr Gary Harris, 40, of the Union of Security Employees, plans to line the route alongside other unionists from 9am. "Mr Lee's leadership and dedication have touched many of us and given us better living and working conditions. This is the least we can do for him," he said.

Many in Mr Lee's Tanjong Pagar constituency plan to line the streets there, and Singapore Police Force bagpipers will play Auld Lang Syne as the procession passes by the Police Cantonment Complex.

The 15.4km procession is expected to take under an hour, and will be broadcast live on national TV, online, as well as at all community centres and tribute sites.

The procession will arrive at the UCC shortly before 2pm for the

funeral service, which top leaders from more than 20 countries will attend alongside family members and 2,000 invited guests.

Mr Lee's son, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, will be the first of 10 people who will deliver eulogies. At the end of the service, the Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) will sound a siren islandwide for everyone to observe a minute of silence, before the pledge is recited and the national anthem sung.

"This rallying call is befitting of members of the public to mark our deepest respect for a remarkable leader," said Colonel Abdul Razak Raheem of the SCDF.

The one-minute silence will also be observed at border checkpoints, and on departing buses and trains.

PM Lee yesterday thanked the last visitors queuing at the Padang and said of today's procession and service: "We have a ceremony which will be a fitting tribute and a fitting mourning and celebration of Mr Lee Kuan Yew's life."

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Additional reporting by  
Tham Yuen-C

## HE CHANGED MY LIFE

**Chua Mui Hoong**  
Hawker's daughter who went to Cambridge PAGE14



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I saw chaos changed to law and order PAGE17



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Singaporeans reflect on how Mr Lee Kuan Yew shaped their lives PAGES12-24

QUEUES TO PAY TRIBUTE

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015



6.20PM AT THE PADANG: The scene throughout yesterday was calm compared to the night before when organisers had to abruptly suspend the queue at 10pm as crowds had swelled beyond safety limits.



7.30PM: The crowd started thinning as the 8pm cut-off neared. Throughout the past four days, neither heat, rain, crowd nor confusion did anything to dispel a collective sense of unity among the hundreds of thousands who went.



10.20PM: Almost all clear now at the Padang, where the 21-gun salute will take place today for Mr Lee Kuan Yew's state funeral. Speaking to reporters at the Padang last night, PM Lee said the past week of public mourning for Mr Lee has been "a tremendous, unique experience for Singaporeans".

# Sprinting to the Padang for a last farewell

Some could not make the queue as it had to be closed as scheduled for the Padang to be prepped for the state funeral's 21-gun salute

Rachel Chang  
Assistant Political Editor

It has been a four-day marathon that closed with a sprint. With the queue to bid a final farewell to founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew set to close at 8pm last night, hundreds of people literally ran the distance between City Hall MRT and the Padang in the minutes leading up to the cut-off.

Some slid past the start point in the nick of time, while others found themselves pleading with marshals to let them join family members in line who were just a few steps quicker. "I was overseas till today," said 42-year-old sales manager Susan Lee. "But I got here just two or three minutes late and it was closed. I wanted to be there in front of the man."

But given the substantial preparations needed for today's procession and state funeral, organisers could not afford to close the line any later than scheduled. At the hour of closing, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong walked around the Padang, thanking people for braving the waits that stretched up to 10 hours at times. After four days, 442,297 people had filed past Mr Lee's casket as of 10pm last night, in scenes PM Lee called "extraordinary and deeply moving".

Mr Lee, who was Singapore's Prime Minister from 1959 to 1990, died on Monday, aged 91.

Speaking to reporters at the Padang last night, PM Lee said the past week of public mourning for Mr Lee has been "a tremendous, unique experience for Singaporeans".

But he said that the line had to end because the Padang needed to be prepped for a 21-gun salute today to honour Mr Lee. "I hope that we will focus our attention on the state funeral."

### A missed chance

"I was overseas till today. But I got here just two or three minutes late and it was closed. I wanted to be there in front of the man."

Sales manager SUSAN LEE, 42

several on the (funeral) ceremony, which is a very important one, and I hope that we will share the moment together," he said.

Earlier in the day, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean said that all the 18 community tribute sites across the island will be open 24 hours to accommodate those who missed their chance to join the queue.

More than a million have visited the tribute sites in the past week. "This is a number which we never really expected to be so large,

just the huge outpouring of emotion from Singapore people for Mr Lee," DPM Teo said at the Padang. "We want to thank everyone who came for their patience and understanding, and their spirit was really a Singapore spirit."

The scene throughout yesterday was calm compared to the night before when organisers had to abruptly suspend the queue at 10pm as crowds swelled beyond safety limits.

Ms Zhou Xin Jie, a marketing executive, arrived at 2am with boyfriend Yap Wei Jie, both 32, while the queue was still suspended. They waited until 6.15am when the suspension was lifted and reached Parliament House at 9am.

"We wanted to do it regardless of how long it would take," she said. Those who came subsequently reported eased queue times of three to five hours through the day. But as the cut-off approached, the crowd swelled and by 6pm, the estimated queueing time had risen to eight hours.

"Throughout the last four days, neither heat, rain, crowd nor confusion did anything to dispel a collective sense of unity and historical purpose among the hundreds of thousands who came."

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime event, so there was no stopping me," said 62-year-old retiree Sam Yan.

Additional reporting by Nur Asyiqin Mohamad Salleh and Yeo Sam Jo



10PM: Army personnel taking down and packing the tents which had been used to shelter members of the public waiting to pay their respects over the past four days.



Singapore's ever-reliable army of cleaners getting a headstart on the clean-up even as the queues of people wait patiently to enter Parliament House last night.



Packing away the thousands of umbrellas used by those waiting in the queue. After four days, 442,297 people had filed past Mr Lee's casket as of 10 o'clock last night.

**Staying put**  
"We stood there for a good two hours. Didn't know what was happening until the police said the queue was closed. But we still decided to stay since we are already here. We came to pay our last respects. It is the least we can do for so much he has done. We want to do it regardless of how long it will take. We are relieved that, at least, we are walking and getting closer."

**Mentally prepared**  
"We came in thinking, 'No matter how long, even 10 hours, we are prepared to wait.' This man is a legend. This is the simplest way to show our respect. We are not frustrated with the line. We know it would be something like this. We made the choice to come even though we knew there would be so many people."

**Way to show respect**  
"We came out of respect. Without him, we would not have Singapore today."

**Persistence**  
"We won't leave until we see him. We don't mind waiting the whole day. But even if I don't get to see him today, at least I tried my best."

**Perfect location**  
"We were going to (sketch) at the Botanic Gardens at first, but we purposely chose this place today. You can get a good view of the skyline and celebrate the success of Singapore."

**Last farewell**  
"I am very disappointed that I missed my chance (to pay my final respects to Mr Lee). But I am trying to stay positive - I can just go down and wait along the street for him tomorrow. I don't know where yet, I will go home now and think (laughs) but, of course, it is different inside Parliament House. That was where he worked. I wanted to say 'bye' to him there."

MR YAP WEI JIE, 32, who joined the line at 2am at Singapore Recreation Club and was relieved when the line started moving at 6am.  
MR SAJAN CHRISTY PEREIRA, 30, a project coordinator, who was queuing with his sister Susan Christy Pereira, 34, a housewife, since 1am. They started queuing at City Hall. Mr Sajan is an Indian national who has lived here for more than eight years.  
MR CHING SHENG, 18, a part-time guest relations officer, who started queuing at 3am outside Raffles City.  
MS JUNE THENG, 19, a Temasek Polytechnic student.  
MADAM TIA BOON SIM, Urban Sketchers Singapore founder. The group of sketch artists had their monthly meeting in the area yesterday, which they chose specifically to pay tribute to the late Mr Lee. Many of the sketches depict people showing up to pay their respects.  
MRS CHARMINE TAN, 54, a housewife, who did not meet the cut-off time of 8pm to join the Padang queue.

LYING IN STATE

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015



FROM MALAYSIA: Datuk Kadir Jasin (left) and former finance minister Daim Zainuddin paying their respects to Mr Lee.



FROM THE NETHERLANDS: Saying a final farewell to Mr Lee are Mrs Aeyelts Averink-Winsemius and Professor Pieter Winsemius (above), close contacts of the former Prime Minister. They are the children of the late Dr Albert Winsemius who was economic adviser to Singapore for about 20 years.



FROM CHINA: Alibaba executive chairman Jack Ma (right) bowing before Mr Lee's casket.



Former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, with Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and his wife Ho Ching, paying his last respects to Mr Lee at Parliament House yesterday. Dr Kissinger acknowledged Mr Lee's role in helping to shape the US approach to China and said his advice was "extremely helpful".

# Dignitaries pay their respects, hail Mr Lee's legacies

They praise the Govt's succession planning, education system and corruption-free society

Tham Yuen-C  
Charissa Yong

Dignitaries singled out Singapore's corruption-free society, education system and the Government's succession planning for praise yesterday, saying these were the legacies of founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

They were speaking to reporters at Parliament House, after paying their respects to Mr Lee yesterday, the last day of the lying in state.

Mr Lee, 91, died last Monday at the Singapore General Hospital, after 47 days in intensive care.

Yesterday, former Indonesian general Prabowo Subianto said Mr Lee had left behind a country that would thrive even without him.

"His greatest legacy... was creating a system that had succeeded in creating a meritocracy, and in grooming two, three generations of good leaders. So that's his great legacy, and Singapore will thrive with what he had achieved," he said.

Mr Prabowo was replying to questions from Indonesian journalists, who had asked if Singapore would survive without Mr Lee. He was also asked about Singapore-Indonesia relations.

He said he was confident nothing would change. He and the other Indonesian leaders were all acquainted with the current generation of Singapore leaders so "there's nothing to worry about".

He added: "I admire Mr Lee Kuan Yew and I think he was a great leader of South-east Asia. He was a good friend of Indonesia. We have a lot to learn from his leadership style and from his thinking."

Quoting from Mr Lee's books, he said Singapore's first Prime Minister had brought Singapore from Third World to First in 50 years, and Afghanistan could try to "reach similar success", through learning from Singapore's and Mr Lee's experiences.

The most important lesson for him, he said, is the need to stamp out corruption.

"He created a society, a country, that is corruption-free. And corruption is a problem that is a major issue for the people and the government, and... the mechanism that he established, the initiative that he embarked on, is something we can truly benefit from," he added.

National University of Singapore president Tan Chorh Chuan, who was part of a vigil group at Mr Lee's lying in state yesterday, paid tribute to his contributions to education and talent development.

Mr Lee believed that every student should be given a chance to develop to his full potential, including the personal aspect, he said.

"Over time he's spoken about character, resilience, ability to overcome. It's shaped the thinking and culture of our educational institutions," Professor Tan said.

Other dignitaries who paid their respects were former US president Bill Clinton, former US national security adviser Tom Donilon, former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, former US ambassador to Singapore Steven Green, former Taiwanese leader Hau Pei-tsun, former Malaysian finance minister Daim Zainuddin, Bhutanese King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck, Philippines Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario and Philippines Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima, and former Indonesian coordinating minister for People's Welfare Agung Laksono.

The list also includes Mr Jack Ma, head of Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, Professor Pieter Winsemius - children of the late Dr Albert Winsemius who was economic adviser to Singapore for about 20 years.

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FROM BHUTAN: King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck.

ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH



FROM THE UNITED STATES: Former president Bill Clinton, who led a US delegation that included former secretary of state Henry Kissinger and former national security adviser Tom Donilon.

ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE



FROM THE PHILIPPINES: Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario (in front) and Finance Secretary Cesar Purisima.

ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

# He made the world a better place: Kissinger

Ex-top US diplomat says his friend of more than 40 years was an amazing phenomenon

Ravi Velloo  
Associate Editor

Prime ministers and potentates from some two dozen nations, joined by close friends of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, gathered last night to bid a final farewell to the man who often was called upon to step in to explain Asia to a global audience confounded by its complexities.

"The world is a better place because of Lee Kuan Yew," said Dr Henry Kissinger, former United States secretary of state and Mr Lee's friend of more than four decades.

"He taught us about the way Asians think about problems and explained to us what development meant in a practical sense. But he also told us, 'We can do that much, and beyond that, somebody else has to do certain things.'"

The former Harvard professor, four months older than Mr Lee, fashioned late US president Richard Nixon's diplomatic breakthrough with China. He was speaking to local media about his long friendship with Mr Lee, whom he first met in 1967.

Describing Mr Lee as "an amazing phenomenon", Dr Kissinger said theirs was not a friendship based on doing things for each other, but one based on learning from each other.

There, he acknowledged Mr Lee's role in helping to shape the US approach to China, which continues to evolve.

"He never came and said, 'You have to do this or that.' He was never a lobbyist," said Dr Kissinger.

He would say, "Here is a situation and you have to understand it if you want to succeed." He explained what the Chinese were doing in their internal politics, their economic policies, their social policies.

The 91-year-old Dr Kissinger is in Singapore as part of the US presidential delegation led by former president Bill Clinton, the popular elder statesman of the Democratic Party. Dr Kissinger is the oldest among the overseas dignitaries attending the funeral.

Whether from tiny Bhutan, with a population of less than a million, or China, the world's biggest nation by population, leaders of 24 nations have travelled to the Republic, including the President of Kazakh

stan and the First Deputy Prime Minister of Russia.

Bhutan King Jigme Khesar Namgyel Wangchuck paid his respects to Mr Lee at the wake yesterday, accompanied by his wife, Queen Jetsun Pema.

Other rulers who will be at the funeral include Malaysia's monarch, Yang di-Pertuan Agong Tuanku Abdul Halim Mu'adzam Shah, Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani.

Every Asean head of government or state is also here, with the exception of the Philippines, which sent President of the Senate Franklin Drilon. Of Asia's big powers - China, Japan and India - the latter two are represented by their prime ministers, while China sent Vice-President Li Yuanchao.

A stream of other dignitaries have also paid respects at Mr Lee's bier. Yesterday, they included former Malaysian finance minister Daim Zainuddin, a man respected by Mr Lee for his savvy.

Condolences from global leaders have also poured in. Egyptian President Fatah al-Sisi called Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong last Friday to offer condolences, paying tribute to the "architect of Singapore's economy", according to his spokesman Alaa Youssef.

The two men met in November 2007 in the Great Hall of the People when Mr Lee was on a visit to Beijing.

In his book, One Man's View Of The World, Mr Lee had said that while he had not asked to see Mr Xi, Chinese officials arranged for him to meet Mr Xi anyway - a sign that he was considered high on the priority list.

It was Mr Xi's first meeting with any foreign leader after being promoted to the Politburo Standing Committee, China's apex decision-making body, a move that indicated to the world he had been slated to take over from then President Hu Jintao, Mr Lee wrote.

Mr Xi struck him as a man of great breadth, he added.

"He is not narrow-minded. He thinks through a problem deeply and does not want to show off his knowledge. He lacks the bombast of Jiang Zemin and is not as formalistic as Hu Jintao. But he has gravitas. That was my first impression," Mr Lee said.

China is sending Vice-President Li Yuanchao to attend today's funeral service for Mr Lee.

Many Chinese leaders, including Executive Vice-Premier Zhang Gaoli and State Councilor Yang Jiechi, have paid tribute to Mr Lee over the past few days.

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# Mr Lee fostered region's ties with world: Xi

Esther Teo  
China Correspondent  
In Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday credited Singapore founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew for his "outstanding contributions" to peace and development in Asia, and for fostering the region's ties with the rest of the world.

Mr Lee Kuan Yew is a strategist and statesman who has the respect of the international society," Mr Xi said in a keynote speech at the annual Boao Forum for Asia in southern Hainan province.

"He has made outstanding contributions to peace and development in Asia, and to fostering the region's ties and cooperation with the rest of the world."

"I would like to take this opportunity to express my highest respect to all the distinguished people who have come before us, including Mr Lee Kuan Yew, who have made contributions to the peaceful development of Asia."

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LYING IN STATE

Mr Lee Kuan Yew 1923 - 2015



A steady stream of people were at Parliament House to pay their respects to Mr Lee, saying goodbye in their own way.



Personnel from the armed forces giving Mr Lee a last salute before Parliament House was closed to the public.

A true son of the soil, says Tan Cheng Bock

Former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was "a true son of the soil" who was driven by his love for Singapore, former MP and presidential candidate Tan Cheng Bock wrote in a Facebook post yesterday, after paying his last respects to Mr Lee at Tanjong Pagar Community Club.

In his post, Dr Tan recalled his encounters with Mr Lee, who had interviewed him to be a candidate for the 1980 General Election.

"I was only a village doctor with a rebellious streak," he said. "But one striking thing he said was, 'We are not looking for yes men.'"

In his Facebook post, he also disclosed how Mr Lee "wasn't happy" that people misunderstood his intentions in creating the post of an elected president, who would have custodial powers over the nation's reserves and key appointments, in 1991.

It was one of the issues that Mr Lee raised during his lunch meetings with MPs, said Dr Tan, who narrowly lost during his own bid to become president in 2011.

"At that time, many thought that he was doing this for himself. He was visibly disturbed (and said) 'I am doing this for Singapore, I don't want to be president,'" Dr Tan said.

Another controversial issue raised by Mr Lee during the lunch meetings was the hubbub over property bought by the Lee family at a discounted price in 1995.

"The first question he shot at me was, 'Cheng Bock, am I a crook?' I told him if he was a crook, I would not have served him in the first place. Mr Lee embodied the virtues of integrity and incorruptibility, without which Singapore could never have succeeded."

Lim Yan Liang



After four days, 442,297 people had filed past Mr Lee's casket as of 10pm last night, in scenes PM Lee called "extraordinary and deeply moving".

Those who made it in the nick of time

Nur Asyiqin Mohamad Salleh

As the minutes ticked towards 8pm yesterday, Ms Lyn Eliza Wong broke into a sprint towards the Padang.

The queue for paying final respects to founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew was drawing to a close, and the 55-year-old was determined not to miss her chance.

As the clock struck 8pm, she ran past the start point and marshals cut the line off behind her.

"This is the best feeling," Ms Wong said jubilantly, safely in line. It would be another six to eight hours before she reached Parliament House, but "I can wait as long as it takes to see him," she said.

Also making it by the skin of her teeth was sales executive Nur Liyana, 26, who was on her second try. On Friday, she left the queue owing to nausea.

"I haven't run so fast since doing PE (physical education) in JC (junior college)," she said with a laugh.



The Tan family, (from left) Mr Sam Tan, his son Pierre, wife Tan Hwee Ping, daughter Rei Tan and baby Luke, were the last in the priority queue to make it to Parliament House before barricades sealed the entrance at 8pm.

Others went away disappointed. Housewife Charmaine Tan, 54, arrived at the queue a few minutes late: "I'm very disappointed, but I'm trying to stay positive."

Referring to the 15.4km funeral procession today, she added: "I can wait up to between HK\$6,000 and HK\$9,000 on Friday night."

Analyst Francis Phuang, 27, paid more to get back yesterday morning. He took a quick shower at the airport and went straight to join the queue at Parliament House.

S'poreans in HK fly home to pay last respects

High demand for seats on Singapore Airlines Flight SQ865 from Hong Kong bound for Singapore last Friday night prompted the carrier to use a 409-seater Airbus A380 superjumbo instead of its usual 278-seater B777 aircraft.

Airfares from Hong Kong to Singapore on SIA and Cathay Pacific also surged three to four times because of the demand, as Singaporeans headed home to pay their last respects to Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

A ticket usually costs HK\$1,700 (S\$300) to HK\$2,000, but fares went up to between HK\$6,000 and HK\$9,000 on Friday night.

"I know at least 40 Singaporean bankers and lawyers working in Hong Kong who had rushed back home to do the same," he said.

"This is a critical moment for the country and we want to be together with the rest of Singapore."

Janice Tai

Mr Lee's final journey. The Straits Times will have live coverage of the state funeral procession and funeral of Mr Lee Kuan Yew on Sunday. Follow our reports on straitstimes.com from 8am. You can also get links to stories, photos and videos on Twitter@stcom and on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/TheStraitsTimes

STATE FUNERAL PROCESSION

The procession starts at 12.30pm and members of the public are invited to line the route. Big crowds are expected nearer Parliament and in town.



12.45pm THE PROCESSION

The gun carriage and escorting vehicles will travel a distance of 15.4km from the Padang to the University Cultural Centre at a speed of 25km/h. They will pass through Shenton Way and HDB estates in Tanjong Pagar, Bukit Merah, Queenstown and Commonwealth.



12.45pm RSAF BLACK KNIGHTS

When the procession passes City Hall, the air force's Black Knights will fly a Missing Man Formation, where one F-16 aircraft will peel away from the group of four as an aerial salute.



12.45pm ARMY 21-GUN SALUTE

Four ceremonial 25-pounder howitzers will fire a 21-gun salute as the gun carriage bearing Mr Lee Kuan Yew's casket makes its way around the Padang.

12.45pm NAVY SAILPAST

Patrol vessels RSS Dauntless and RSS Resilience will sail from both ends of the Singapore Strait along the southern coastline past key coastal landmarks, before meeting and sailing in formation towards Marina Bay. With the state flag at half-mast, they will fly a black flag used for mourning with signal flags representing the letters L, K and Y. As the procession passes the Padang, the ships will sound three prolonged horn blasts of 10 seconds each.

Map of the State Funeral Procession route. Key locations include Parliament House, University Cultural Centre, City Hall, and various roads. Includes a 'WHERE TO WATCH' section with tips for spectators and live coverage information.

1.40pm University Cultural Centre

The cortege is expected to arrive here at 1.40pm, and will be received by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and family members, and 16 pallbearers. They include Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and labour chief Lim Swee Say.

ROAD CLOSURES

Table with 2 columns: PERIOD and LANES & ROADS AFFECTED. Lists road closures for various times during the procession.

NOTE: Police officers will be stationed at all affected road junctions to direct traffic.

STATE FUNERAL SERVICE

- List of details for the state funeral service, including start times, attendees, and locations.

SOURCES: STATE FUNERAL ORGANISING COMMITTEE, TRAFFIC POLICE ST GRAPHICS



## By gum, the West is wrong about Singapore

Joyce Hool

Freedom's just another word for nothing left to lose  
— Me & Bobby McGee,  
Kris Kristofferson

It must be nice to be Western and superior. It must be nice to judge from afar a grieving and poorly understood nation that is often confused with China. As Singapore came to terms this week with the loss of a titan, the country also came under scrutiny, a great deal of which was admiring in a back-handed way.

After Mr Lee Kuan Yew died, The Guardian devoted an entire article to his policy on chewing gum. Decades of phenomenal GDP growth, the lowest crime rate in the region and top-notch healthcare, and Westerners are still talking about the frigg'n chewing gum. This is like being complimented on your English.

The day Mr Lee's body was moved from the Istana to Parliament House, a wire agency article concluded by saying that the proceedings felt "almost too well organised" to some Singaporeans. This is like being told your English sounds "almost" too polished.

And this week, a Telegraph piece called Singapore "proud and prosperous", but could not resist throwing in "somewhat antiseptic". This almost made me regret learning English.

These articles share a churlish and tired subtlety, that Singapore is somehow less of a country because it lacks some kind of personality that foreigners expect this part of the world to have.

The Western lexicon for Asia is a funny thing, and I have a real estate agent's relationship with it. When a house is advertised as having "charm", it means that its toilet doesn't work. When a country in this region is lauded for its "charm", it usually means that its people have a touch-and-go relationship with indoor plumbing.

"Quaint" means paddy fields where white-collar jobs should be. "Plenty of character" means the

roads are not paved and you get diarrhoea from the ice cubes.

If this is what "charm" is, Singapore does not need it. And if it is handwoven baskets and barefoot children you want to see, go to another country that was not farsighted or fortunate enough to avoid being charming.

For a long time, Singapore has been the gloss treatment other cosmopolitan cities get. Fifth Avenue is worshipped as a glamorous shrine to shopping, but Orchard Road is frequently portrayed as soulless.

When outsiders report on Singapore, words like "gleaming" and "spotless" are used as though they were epithets.

Once in New York City, thanks to my dithering, my husband took too long to order a sandwich at Katz's Deli and got snapped at by one of the legendarily ornery servers. "This is Noo Yawk", the server said, as if that explained everything, and it did.

Likewise, this is Singapore. Everyone is in a hurry and they will hold pre-briefings for briefings, a post-briefing after and a break for a cost-benefit analysis. This is Singapore, this is what makes it great. This is also why I became a citizen of this country — because I got tired of "charm".

Besides, if anyone has the right to complain about Singapore, it is the Singaporeans. This right, they have exercised as though it were the Second Amendment and they were Americans.

According to Mr Lee, the Singaporean is a "champion grumbler". He said this in 1977, so citizens have been practising for at least 38 years.

These days, the complaining is the loudest it has ever been, and some of it doesn't even make sense. Mr Lee's passing has unearthed old chestnuts about the stifling of creativity and freedoms. This grumbling was understandable 15 years ago, but who is stopping you from being creative now?

For how long do you intend to blame the spectre of a man before taking responsibility for the limita-

tions of your own mind? What books have you been unable to gain access to, what TV shows have you been unable to watch and what poorly informed, anonymous comments on the Internet have you been unable to write?

If my party is censorious and forbidding, it is the society we have allowed ourselves to become, one that drives people into hiding in Perth when they have done something we find unacceptable.

Today, the prevailing attitude is miles away from Mr Lee's hard-driving, survivalist one. Now, people want to trade a few percentage points of GDP growth for the balance of work and life, as though work were not part of life. They want a softer approach to this idea of competition or betterment, a more consensual form of governance.

What the people want, the people will eventually get — that is both the beauty and horror of democracy. And such has been the earlier success of Singapore that its people have the middle-class wherewithal to demand change, and the Government has the resources to provide it.

Like many other immigrants, I came here to escape corruption, injustice and water that came out of taps brown in colour. I came here because I understood this to be a place that rewarded industry and ability while tolerating — if not welcoming — extreme dorkiness.

I've had the luxury of being able to mind my own business, largely because the Government had minded everyone's. This is not for everyone, I'm sure, and as Singaporeans clamour for more self-determination, they will get it, if only because *tempora mutantur, nos et mutamur in illis* (The times change, and we change with them).

I have my reservations about what this country will become, but as for how it came to be, my appreciation is unequivocal, without qualification and unreserved. Thank you, Mr Lee, for Singapore. There was nothing more you could have done.

This commentary appeared in **The Business Times** yesterday

## Tribute events held on eve of state funeral

Grassroots groups and business communities hold ceremonies to remember Mr Lee

Chong Zi Liang

On the eve of the state funeral of the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew, groups gathered at ceremonies across the island for a common purpose: to pay tribute to Singapore's first Prime Minister.

Ministers eulogised him and Singaporeans placed flowers at his portraits as the country continued to mourn Mr Lee, who died on Monday at the age of 91.

At the Tanjong Pagar Community Club, Mr Chan Chun Sing, an MP in the Tanjong Pagar GRC, where Mr Lee served for 60 years, said that building on the solid foundation that Mr Lee laid would be a good way to honour him.

Fighting back tears, Mr Chan, who is Minister for Social and Family Development, said the last time he cried was some years ago, in 2013, at a National Day dinner, which Mr Lee attended despite falling ill.

"He was very frail. But not only did he keep his promise to turn up, he delivered a speech — not just from where he was seated, but up on the stage... (where he) ran up the stairs, stood there unaided and delivered a speech. And not just in English, but also in Chinese."

Fellow Tanjong Pagar GRC MP Indraneel Rajah recounted how she made matching batik shirts for Tanjong Pagar GRC MPs to wear on Tree Planting Day in 2004.

But Mr Lee had forgotten and arrived in a white shirt. Upon seeing his fellow MPs all dressed in the pre-arranged attire, he immediately sent a security officer on motor-cycle to fetch his shirt from his home.

She said she was touched by his move to not disappoint a young MP. She had been elected in 2001. After eulogies, including from People's Action Party Tanjong Pagar-Tiong Bahru branch secretary Freddy Ang, those present observed a minute of silence. They also took turns to bow before his portrait and wrote condolence messages.

"I am very sad I could not see Mr Lee in person, so I've tried to make it up by paying my respects to him here every day," said long-time resident Wong Ah Mui, 79.

At Tampines Community Plaza, where about 9,000 residents gathered for a memorial, Education Minister Heng Swee Keat spoke of his personal dealings with Mr Lee.

He recounted his days as Mr Lee's principal private secretary from 1997 to 2000, and his interactions with him after becoming Education Minister in 2011.

Mr Heng said that six months ago, he showed Mr Lee the ministry's work on bilingualism, and Mr Lee asked many questions about the materials and whether they were effective for students and teachers.

"At the end of it, I was about to take the materials back, and he said 'Leave it there. I will read it again.'" Mr Heng, who could not hold back tears when he spoke, said Mr Lee's death was "especially painful" for him as the chairman of the SG50 Steering Committee.

"I wanted Mr Lee to see for himself how we are able to come together after all his hard work," he said. "I think many Singaporeans wanted to see Mr Lee at the National Day Parade this year."

At Hong Lim Park, Transport Minister Lui Tuck Yew said that Mr Lee's illness and death had "drawn us together in a way that nobody, alive or dead, can ever do".

He lauded the patience, graciousness and care that Singaporeans

had shown to one another over the past few days as they stood in line for hours to pay their final respects to Mr Lee, whose body has been lying in state at Parliament House since Wednesday.

"I hope that what we have seen in these past days will continue to linger, will continue to deepen, because that is the best way to honour Mr Lee," he said. When 1,500 members of the business community paid tribute to Mr Lee at a memorial event at the Raffles City Convention Centre, which was attended by Trade and Industry Minister Lim Hng Kiang and leaders of different chambers of commerce.

Mr Lim reminded the audience that Mr Lee often said that no one owned Singapore a living, and that he was confident the Republic would survive "on our resourcefulness and hard work of our people".

Mr Lee also had faith in smaller groups such as the Malay business community, noted Mr Zahidi Abdul Rahman, president of the Singapore Malay Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"As an example, Mr Lee said we are the chilli padi of the business world — small but super spicy," Mr Zahidi said.

Additional reporting by Rachel Au Yong, Amelia Teng and Rachael Boon



(Clockwise from above) A cardboard collection of snapshots of Mr Lee Kuan Yew among bouquets at the Tanjong Pagar Community Club; members of the public paying their respects to Mr Lee at Tanjong Pagar CC yesterday; and Education Minister Heng Swee Keat breaking down in tears at the memorial event in Tampines as Mr Mah Bow Tan offers comfort.

## Mandai Crematorium closed this afternoon

The Mandai Crematorium and Colunbarium will be closed this afternoon for the cremation service of the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

The crematorium will shut its doors to the public from 1pm while the colunbarium will be closed from 3pm, the National Environment Agency (NEA) said on Friday.

It also noted that the annual Qing Ming Festival, where Chinese families pay respects to their departed loved ones, starts this weekend.

To minimise congestion during the festival, the agency advised the public to avoid visiting the Choa Chu Kang Cemetery and the govern-

ment columbariums at Mandai, Yishun, Mount Vernon and Choa Chu Kang during the expected peak periods.

These are the Good Friday holiday on Friday, the Qing Ming festival date next Sunday, and the other Sundays during the festival period that lasts from today to April 19.

## 20 hours of visiting, and I didn't get to see Mr Lee



## Indian community lauds racial tolerance

Lim Yan Liang

Indian Singaporeans gathered to pay tribute to former Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew yesterday, highlighting his steadfast belief in meritocracy and multiculturalism.

Six community leaders spoke at the event organised by self-help group Sinda and held at the P. Govindasamy Pillai Hall in Serangoon.

Ambassador-at-large Gopinath Pillai, who lived in Malaysia in the 1960s, recalled the 1969 race riots in Kuala Lumpur that proved to be "one of the most traumatic events" of his life.

It was a turning point that saw him return to Singapore, a place where his family would be judged on merit, not race.

"Mr Lee was not oblivious to the racial differences of the people of Singapore. He understood them. All he wanted was the different races to keep their culture, build on their culture, but develop a strong

sense of tolerance for other cultures," he said.

Sinda life trustee Sat Pal Khattar recalled a lunch where Mr Lee expressed doubts as to whether India would succeed.

"Fifteen years later, he was not afraid to say he was wrong about India," he said. "This is the firmament of Mr Lee Kuan Yew."

Sikh community leader Charanjit Singh thanked Mr Lee for his unflinching belief in equality, which translated into policies that ensured that even the Sikhs — a "minority within a minority" — would feel very bit a part of Singapore.

"As a result of this, the Sikhs have always felt at home in Singapore," said the president of the Singapore Khalsa Association.

About 650 people from 150 Indian organisations attended the event. Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office S. Iswaran, as well as current and former MPs, were also present.

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Tong Ming Chien

I was at Parliament House and the Istana for more than 20 hours last week and did not get to see Mr Lee Kuan Yew lying in state.

Then again, that is because I did not try.

I visited the tribute areas of both places, but never found the need to join the long queues to Parliament House.

I designed a poster with a photo of Mr Lee smiling broadly and added the words: "A nation stands humbled by such a lifetime of courage and dedication. The people of Singapore owe a debt of gratitude that can never be fully repaid, only honoured."

Last Monday night, I placed a black-and-white image of Mr Lee, which the building management had installed over a display window.

Over the next few days, I returned to both places to check on the posters, spending about five hours each time for a total of more than 20 hours throughout the week. I replaced the posters when they got torn and helped to straighten the bouquets or cards that had tipped over.

In between, I also spoke to the usher and the people who came by to place tributes, sometimes acting as a guide of sorts to those who asked for directions.

Quietly observed as people craned to look at hand-written cards placed on the tribute walls and knelt down to read the fine handwriting on the bouquets as the heady scent of roses and lilies drifted in and out with the night breeze.

When they chanced on my poster, I quietly observed as people craned to look at hand-written cards placed on the tribute walls and knelt down to read the fine handwriting on the bouquets as the heady scent of roses and lilies drifted in and out with the night breeze.

Then there were the staff who went through the floral arrangements to cart away the wilted ones, but not before carefully placing cards and soft toys attached to the bouquets into brown paper cartons for shipping.

There were also tourists who wanted to join the queue, but were crestfallen to learn it would be an eight-hour wait.

On Thursday night, a pair of schoolgirls said they had a plastic windmill, but asked if it was appropriate to leave it there since it was



The writer Tong Ming Chien's poster of Mr Lee Kuan Yew is among the bouquets at the tribute area outside the Istana gate.

brightly coloured in pink and yellow.

I assured them it was perfectly all right.

Unofficial tribute corners have also popped up. At High Street Centre just opposite the main entrance of Parliament House, flowers and cards were left below a giant black-and-white image of Mr Lee, which the building management had installed over a display window.

If you had wanted to go to Parliament House to have a last look at Mr Lee but could not, take heart that many others did not either. And not because they did not care, they simply could not.

Among them would be the hard-working men and women at the various tribute centres — many of which have been open round the clock all over Singapore. But they soldiered on just so that those who wanted to pay their last respects could.

My sister went to the tribute centre next to the Jurong Regional Library. When she teared up, she was thoughtfully and immediately offered a piece of tissue paper by an usher.

For me, I came close to Mr Lee only briefly six years ago in the most unexpected fashion.

My family had just finished dinner next to the Jurong Regional Library. When she teared up, she was thoughtfully and immediately offered a piece of tissue paper by an usher.

As we neared the Fullerton Hotel, just outside the Bank of China building, there was a narrow, temporary low bridge placed over unfinished road works.

We were about to cross it when we spied a small group at the other end. Because the bridge was so narrow, we stayed back to allow the other party to cross first.

It was quite dark and they were already halfway across the bridge when my sister exclaimed in surprise and excitement: "Oh, Mr Lee!"

And there in the dim glow of street lamps he was, dressed in a white shirt and dark pants. He was surrounded by a few members of his security detail.

One of them said as the group approached: "No handshakes, please."

Mr Lee was soon almost within touching distance. He was looking hard at the ground — the bridge was uneven and shrouded in semi-darkness — seemingly deep in thought. His group passed us in silence.

That was in 2009, just a year before Mr Lee died on Oct 2, 2010, after being bedridden for a few years.

A colleague remarked that if Mr Lee were alive and saw the long lines going to Parliament House, he would probably say: "No need for all this sentimentality, please get back to work and build a better Singapore."

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## TRIBUTES: A NATION GRIEVES

# 'Carry on forging racial harmony'

Religious groups offer prayers and foreign workers pay respects at various locations

Amelia Tan

Singapore's special brand of religious and racial harmony owes much to the vision of the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

And Singaporeans must now ensure that even greater understanding is forged through education and continuing dialogue between the different groups.

This was the call from religious leaders who attended yesterday's memorial service organised by the Inter-Religious Organisation (IRO).

IRO president Gurmit Singh said Mr Lee had long encouraged religious groups to interact with one another, since Singapore became independent in 1965.

"By constantly communicating and working together, the different groups have developed close ties. We must continue to educate the young and build on these ties," he said.

At the service at the IRO's Palmer Road office, Chua Chu Kang GRC MP Zaqy Mohamad said Mr Lee's emphasis on treating Singaporeans fairly regardless of race and religion was key to nation-building.

The service was attended by about 300 members of the public and representatives of the 10 major religions. They observed a minute of silence and pinned tributes in a book – just one of a host of events for Singapore's founding father.

Separately, some 30 Bangladeshi workers chose to show their respect by reciting poems and singing songs in his memory yesterday evening. They gathered in a Little India shophouse which serves as the office of the Bangladeshi newspaper, Banglar Kantha, which organised the hour-long service.

Banglar Kantha editor A.K.M. Mohtsin, 52, said many Bangladeshis have a deep respect for Mr Lee. He developed Singapore, which in turn provided them with jobs. Shipyard worker Rajib Shil Jibon, 29, penned his own poem simply called Lee Kuan Yew.

"I was filled with so much emotion as I thought of him. He has made Singapore successful and helped foreign workers get better jobs and improved our lives. I will be thankful forever," he said.

At the Tuas View Dormitory for foreign workers, a tribute corner was set up in Mr Lee's memory. Around 3,000 foreign workers visited the site, signed a condolence book and observed a few moments of silence as a mark of respect.

At another event, leaders and members of Sikh institutions visited the Ang Mo Kio community tribute site and were received by Ang Mo Kio GRC MP Inderjit Singh. The group, who was accompanied by a priest, offered a prayer.



PHOTOS: COORDINATING COUNCIL OF SIKH INSTITUTIONS SINGAPORE, TUAS VIEW DORMITORY (Right) Sikhs offering prayers and thanks at the Ang Mo Kio tribute site. (Above) Some 3,000 foreign workers visited a tribute corner in Tuas View Dormitory to sign a condolence book and observe a few moments of silence.

Prayers were also said at Sikh temples across Singapore in Mr Lee's honour and Central Sikh Gurdwara Board president Gurcharan Singh offered a eulogy at the Central Sikh Temple. A video of Mr Lee's visits to Sikh institutions over the years was also screened.

Yesterday, 5,000 students, teachers, parents and alumni from the Methodist Schools' Foundation dedicated a 4km walk to Mr Lee. The biennial event is part of a fund-raising drive for the 16 schools under the foundation. Organisers decided to use the walk to pay tribute to Mr Lee's memory.

"My parents tell me Mr Lee was an influential leader and a good role model. He believed a lot in education. It is thanks to him that I have such good teachers," said Fairfield Methodist School (Secondary) student Joshua Ho, 13.

This morning, the Singapore Jain Religious Society will hold a prayer meeting in memory of Mr Lee on its Jalan Yasin premises.



PHOTOS: COORDINATING COUNCIL OF SIKH INSTITUTIONS SINGAPORE, TUAS VIEW DORMITORY (Right) Sikhs offering prayers and thanks at the Ang Mo Kio tribute site. (Above) Some 3,000 foreign workers visited a tribute corner in Tuas View Dormitory to sign a condolence book and observe a few moments of silence.

## 15 police reports filed over teen's online video

Joyce Lim

At least 15 police reports have been filed against a teenager for posting a video online allegedly celebrating Mr Lee Kuan Yew's death and criticising his political career.

Police said they are looking into the matter.

The video, called Lee Kuan Yew Is Finally Dead!, was posted on Friday and has been viewed more than 270,000 times.

It has been slammed by netizens, though some defended him. In the video, 16-year-old Amos Yee, who once played a minor role in one of local filmmaker Jack Neo's movies, also challenged Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to sue him.

Amos, who wrote in his latest blogpost his intention to pursue a career in film and YouTube, could not be reached for comment.

Yesterday, lawyer Chia Boon Teck – one of those who made a po-

lice report – said: "This is not a mindless rant. It is a well-considered campaign backed by graphics and statistics to defame Mr Lee and our government. It cannot go unchallenged. He has to take responsibility for his social media posting that was calculated to provoke the public's response."

His online report included signatures from 11 other complainants. One of them, businessman Timothy Wimala, 34, said: "No Singaporean can deny the benefits we have got from Mr Lee's service to our nation. He has only just left us and yet we have a beneficiary of his legacy barely of adolescence but sparing no insult against the man who put this country on the world map."

Filmmaker Jack Neo told The Sunday Times that Amos had played a minor role in his film We Not Naughty. "When I first met him, he was only 13," he said. "We no longer have contact with each other."

Yesterday, lawyer Chia Boon Teck – one of those who made a po-

## Retired Gurkhas honour Mr Lee

Chong Zi Liang

About 150 retired Gurkhas and their family members (right) paid homage to the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew in Kathmandu on Friday at a ceremony where they garlanded a portrait of Singapore's founding Prime Minister and observed a minute's silence in honour of him.

The ceremony was organised by the Singapore Gurkha Pensioners' Association, which noted Mr Lee's contributions to Singapore in a statement: "All of us – as members of the Gurkha Contingent serving in Singapore, as wives who in daily life exchanged chit-chat with Singaporeans and as school children who learnt of Lee Kuan Yew in school – know Lee Kuan Yew the man who made Singapore the country it is today."

The Gurkhas are an elite force recruited from the foothills of Nepal

to serve in foreign militaries. In Singapore, they belong to the police force's Gurkha Contingent, which was formed in 1949.

"Lee Kuan Yew's hard work was enjoyed not just by Singaporeans, but also by all of us who have lived in Singapore. He was like a father to us all," the statement added.

The Gurkhas also gave their condolences to Mr Lee's three children and "to the nation of Singapore".

The association's chairman Bhogendra Gurung, who retired as an inspector in 2005, said he would salute Mr Lee when he left or returned home by car. Having spent many years standing guard at the Oxley Road residence, Mr Gurung observed: "The light in his study room was always on until 2am or even 3am. He was a very hard-working man who worked late into the night for Singapore."

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PHOTO: COURTESY OF SINGAPORE GURKHAS PENSIONERS' ASSOCIATION

## Overseas citizens prepare to watch live telecast of funeral

Tan Dawn Wei  
In London

Singaporeans around the world braced themselves to watch their founding father pass into history, calling loved ones at home and arranging community gatherings to watch the live telecast of today's funeral.

The Singapore High Commission in London had never seen so many visitors at its Belgravia building as yesterday morning, when about 500 Singaporeans turned up for a memorial service for Mr Lee Kuan Yew. Many could not enter the building and had to stand outside as High Commissioner Foo Chi Hsia and six other Singaporeans living in the United Kingdom paid tribute to Mr Lee.

One of them, Ms Azza Moiz, 52, who runs her own consultancy and training company in London, spoke fondly of having found a black-and-white photograph last year of her family and her with Mr Lee and his family taken in 1964 at Mount Faber.

Ms Foo said she believes "there is a bit of Mr Lee's DNA in all of us", and encouraged Singaporeans to continue nurturing those qualities – namely, staying inclusive and multiracial.

Yesterday's memorial service preceded a charity walk at London's

famed Hyde Park. The Singapore UK Association and the UK-Singapore Students' Council had organised the walk, 5.50 March for Charity, in aid of the Community Chest in Singapore.

Since Mr Lee's passing last Monday, the number of people who registered had surged from 250 to more than 700.

Mr Bernard Sin, 47, a Singaporean based in Geneva, Switzerland, took an early morning flight to London with his wife and 16-year-old son to join the 5km walk through Hyde Park. Mr Lee's death has made the charity walk more poignant, said Mr Sin.

In Calgary, Canada, Mrs Kala Pillay said: "About 8,000 miles away I will be keeping vigil and following the funeral of our beloved Singaporean. Engraved in my mind is the picture of him sweeping my classroom floor with us during the Use Your Hands campaign in 1975."

In Seoul, Mr David Lim, 56, an adviser to a South Korean shipping company, planned to join 80 fellow nationals at Singapore Club Seoul. "As a young boy I witnessed the 1964 riots and had to hide indoors. I cannot say how deeply indebted I am for the security he has given me," he said.

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Additional reporting by Chang May Choong



Ms Foo Chi Hsia paying tribute to Mr Lee at a memorial service at the Singapore High Commission in London yesterday. She believes "there is a bit of Mr Lee's DNA in all of us" and encourages Singaporeans to keep nurturing those qualities.

## Malaysians yearn for a Malay version of Mr Lee

Shannon Teoh  
Malaysia Correspondent  
in Kuala Lumpur

Now that he's gone, Malaysians are having another look at Mr Lee Kuan Yew's legacy, and some say they want a similar version – in their own country.

Struggling with perceptions of rising corruption, and worried about rising sectarianism – such as Malay Muslim parties pushing for Islamic criminal law this month, despite protests from minorities – Malaysians are yearning for strong leadership that can take some of the tough decisions they think will solve the woes of the country.

"We need a Malay version," former law minister Zaid Ibrahim told The Sunday Times, referring to Mr Lee. "He made unpopular decisions but stuck to his principles of good governance and integrity."

The contrasting economic and social paths taken by the two neighbours since 1965 is often the subject of comparison in salons in Kuala Lumpur and around the country. There is also talk about Mr Lee's famous spat with Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

In their nine overlapping years as prime ministers, they bickered over numerous issues such as the purchase of water from Malaysia, rekindling their fierce debates from when both were Malaysian MPs in 1964.

"We crossed swords many times during the debates. He included me among the ultra Malays who were responsible for the racial riots in Singapore."

"Actually, I never went to Singapore to stir up trouble," Dr Mahathir said in his blog after Mr Lee's passing. "Somebody else whom I would not name did," he added.

Yet, some believe that Mr Lee retained an attachment to Malaysia. "People underestimate the attachment to Malaysia which Mr Lee had," according to Defence Minister Hishammuddin Hussein, whose father Tun Hussein Onn was Malaysia's third prime minister and has known the Lee family for six decades.

"Not many people know his fondness and experience with Malaysia. He vividly remembered those experiences and had fond memories of villages. I hope he managed to rekindle them in his last few years and to do what he

hoped to do, which is to relieve his experiences."

To be sure, not all share these rosy memories of Mr Lee, who was often portrayed in Malaysia as a bogeyman whose continued presence in the country would have caused instability.

Still, even critics have a grudging respect for the man. During a week-long whirlwind tour in 2009, he saw Tun Abdullah Badawi – who had just resigned as prime minister since Richard Nixon (1969-1974) has sought his counsel at some point during their tenure.

"Little surprise then that after a while, many of the tributes for Mr Lee emerging from the US started to strike very similar notes."

President Barack Obama hailed Mr Lee for "his insights on Asia, geopolitics, and economics, which have shaped the thinking of many around the world."

Vice-President Joe Biden spoke about the "breadth and depth" of Mr Lee's understanding of the world; Secretary of State John Kerry said he was a "uniquely astute analyst and observer of Asia"; former president Bill Clinton brought up Mr Lee's "brilliant analysis and wise advice"; Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel described him as a "faced voice of reason America always counted on".

Still, his tributes capture but a small fraction of Mr Lee's real American legacy.

## An astute observer who could make things happen

Jeremy Au Yong  
US Bureau Chief  
in Washington

One of the abiding memories former US diplomat Jeffrey Bader has of Mr Lee Kuan Yew is a 1997 meeting in Singapore where the then Senior Minister captivated the Americans, including Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

"I remember on the way out, she was dazzled," said Dr Bader. "She was dazzled by the strategic narrative, the adroitness and deftness of what she heard about China."

To top it off, Mr Lee had the answer to a question the US officials had been grappling with.

"At the time, nobody knew who the next premier of China was going to be. There was just a lot of rumours and a lot of speculation," said Dr Bader, now a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution.

"But he just said flat out during the meeting that the next premier was going to be Mr Zhu Rongji. Just said it, like a matter of fact."

Talk to any American leader or senior official who had met Mr Lee, and he or she will have similar anecdotes to tell.

Mr Lee is known in this part of the world as an unparalleled observer of China, and every US president since Richard Nixon (1969-1974) has sought his counsel at some point during their tenure.

Little surprise then that after a while, many of the tributes for Mr Lee emerging from the US started to strike very similar notes."

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Still, his tributes capture but a small fraction of Mr Lee's real American legacy.

## Three vital lessons in leadership

Jeremy Schwarz

They expected him to fail. But 50 years later, while we remember the man Harry Lee Kuan Yew, who transformed Singapore from a British colonial outpost into a prosperous global city-state, we must not overlook some of his key lessons in leadership.

After separation from Malaysia, the future of Singapore looked bleak. Mr Lee inherited a toxic mix of racial unrest, an unemployment rate of 30 per cent, domestic instability and economic uncertainty. Singapore could have followed the path of Mr Sukarno, Mr Ferdinand Marcos or even Mr Ngo Dinh Diem.

Mr Lee concluded otherwise. He fundamentally understood that people are everything. Long before the era of corporate strategists, new-age gurus, or smooth-talking politicians, he saw that the development of the people of Singapore – its core natural resource – was the key to long-term economic growth, social development and national prosperity.

It held that Singapore was located in one of the key global maritime choke points, but its long-term ability to seize such opportunities rested on the skills of its labour force and ambition of its nascent middle class. Mr Lee and his ministers carried it out by following three general principles.

**See people, not racial groups**  
Mr Lee respected racial identity but would not be intimidated by it. He acknowledged race as a dimension of one's identity but sought to se-

crete Singapore's national identity as a multiracial society. He combated racism by addressing access to education, employment and social integration as key planks in building a cohesive nation composed of multiple races, ethnicities and religions. The commitment to meritocracy and a commitment to addressing the underlying economic and social challenges remain as consistent parts of Singapore's approach towards maintaining a cohesive society.

**Invest in people, not axioms**

Mr Lee based his entire economic development plan on a simple question: Does it work? If something worked, it was continued or improved upon. If something failed, it was scrapped and a new idea was employed. As such, he invested in infrastructure and national institutions, ranging from building Changi International Airport and the world's largest container port to establishing the Biopolis and the research hubs at the National University of Singapore.

In turn, Singapore maintained itself as a free port city while running one of the most highly successful publicly owned airlines in the world. Home ownership soared and led to the stability of Singapore's middle class through the sale of public housing to new families. Corruption was met head-on through a combination of tough penalties and highly competitive salaries for the civil service.

Government and corporate scholarships cemented a growing, well-educated middle class. Mr Lee was neither a neo-liberal nor a socialist; he was a pragmatist. He embraced ideas to the extent that such ideas yielded positive results.

**Lead people from the front, don't follow them from behind**  
Mr Lee was fundamentally shaped by the brutality of the Japanese Occupation of Singapore. For Mr Lee, politics was about ensuring the survival of his country – his home and family – in an uncertain world. Simply put: You adapt or become irrelevant.

He chose his battles wisely, but once chosen, he broke his opponents before they could break him. He ordered mass arrests to combat a nascent communist insurgency. He established universal military training for all males after independence. And he pursued tough and invasive policies in transforming the personal habits of his own people in order to transform Singapore into a "First World nation in a Third World region".

Even in his final years, he tackled controversial subjects such as family planning, immigration and population growth. The final chapter on Mr Lee Kuan Yew's legacy will remain unwritten for some time. It is complex and controversial. But whatever it may be, the fact remains that his leadership has significantly and substantially improved the lives of the people of Singapore and, along the way, inspired other national leaders to do the same for their own people. And that is a legacy worth remembering.

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PHOTO BY AP/WIDE WORLD  
Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew being welcomed to the White House by then US President Ronald Reagan during his 1985 visit. Mr Lee later addressed a joint session of Congress.

After all, as astute as his analysis of Asia was, Mr Lee's intention was not to be simply wise counsel for the US or a voice of reason for the country to turn to.

Being a source of wisdom is of little value when one is no longer around to dispense it – and Mr Lee is not known as one for ephemeral pursuits. Rather, he seemed to parlay the trust he earned into a platform for Singapore and Asia. In gaining the ear of the US, he gave Singapore a voice much louder than it would otherwise have had and continually pushed the US to engage in the region.

Long before Mr Obama's so-called "pivot to Asia" – a policy Mr Lee is also given credit for – the Singaporean leader urged the US not to turn its back on the region despite its trauma in the Vietnam War.

Mr Ernie Bower, the Sumitro Chair for South-east Asia Studies at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, says: "Mr Lee and Singapore helped deepen US engagement in ASEAN and get over the geopolitical hangover of the Vietnam War. The fact that

US frequently to meet presidents and lawmakers. On those visits, he was unlike any diplomat. For one thing, he had seemingly little patience for the niceties and small talk of diplomacy.

In a 2009 meeting with President Obama, he launched into a scathing critique of the US fiscal and trade deficits seconds after the two leaders sat down.

And as US statesman Henry Kissinger notes, Mr Lee did not go to Washington to lobby for assistance for Singapore.

"His theme was the indispensable US contribution to the defence and growth of a peaceful world. His interiors attended not to be petitioned but to learn from one of the truly profound global thinkers of our time," said Dr Kissinger.

Any discussion about Mr Lee's legacy in the US would not be complete, however, without considering his headline policies.

Mention Singapore and the image that comes to mind for the ordinary American is the caning of US teenager Michael Fay for vandalism in Singapore, and the ban on chewing gum. The US media has also spent some of the days since Mr Lee's death going over the instances when political opponents or newspapers were sued.

Indeed, those in policy circles who interacted with Mr Lee primarily through the lens of governance and policy would mainly see a great statesman who built a country where one should not exist. Those who encountered Mr Lee primarily in the human rights sphere would invariably focus on the cost of that nation-building.

Dr Bader puts it this way: "I don't think Mr Lee would have been surprised by some of the reaction, nor would he have cared."

And perhaps former secretary of state Colin Powell best sums it up in his tribute to Mr Lee. For all of Mr Lee's vision and intellect, Mr Powell said, the defining feature that made him great was the fact that he was a do-er.

"Vision and determination are not as important as execution, making something happen... Some will say, maybe he was too tough, well maybe so, but the results show."

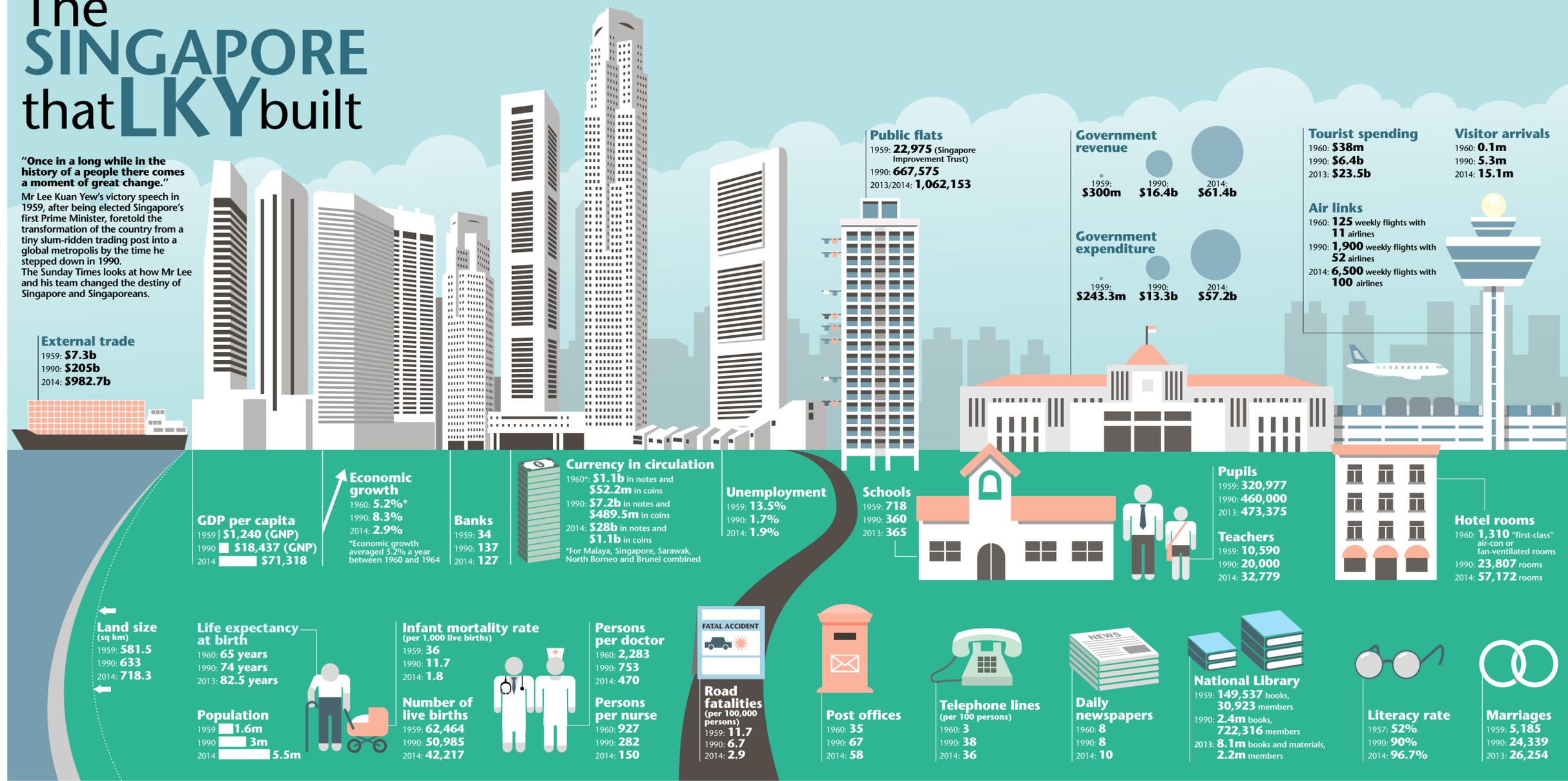
Before failing health curtailed his travels, Mr Lee would visit the

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# The SINGAPORE that LKY built

"Once in a long while in the history of a people there comes a moment of great change."

Mr Lee Kuan Yew's victory speech in 1959, after being elected Singapore's first Prime Minister, foretold the transformation of the country from a tiny slum-ridden trading post into a global metropolis by the time he stepped down in 1990. The Sunday Times looks at how Mr Lee and his team changed the destiny of Singapore and Singaporeans.



SOURCES: State of Singapore annual report 1960, Singapore 1991, World Bank, Singapore Department of Statistics, Ministry of Health, Singapore Tourism Board, Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority, Infocomm Development Authority of Singapore, Singapore Post, Ministry of Communications and Information, Ministry of Education, National Arts Council, Land Transport Authority, Housing and Development Board. TEXT: HONA CHAN. ST GRAPHICS: CHING CHOON HONG.



**FROM SLUMS TO HOMES**  
"I was really scared of entering the lift the first time. Who knew what would happen when the doors closed?"  
MADAM HIAP CHENG LAY, 71, who runs a drink stall, on moving into her first Housing Board flat



**CRITICAL EARLY BATTLES**  
"There was never any active harassment, only this fear in everyone's mind that 'I don't want to be seen with this person.'"  
AUTHOR AND CARTOONIST OTTO FONG, 46, whose father Fong Swee Suan was detained for communist links



**DEFENDING OURSELVES**  
"I felt it was my duty at a time when my country needed me to do the right thing."  
CONSULTANT PRASAD KUMAR MENON, 67, on signing up to join the air force when the British announced their military withdrawal from Singapore



**EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES**  
"I was one of the beneficiaries of the system, which lifted me from poverty to where I am today."  
STARHUB CHIEF TAN TONG HAI, 51, on the sound education he received in Singapore schools



**GOING REGIONAL**  
"He cautioned that not all of us would succeed... The whole thing was about encouragement. There was a risk but we needed to go."  
DR ROBERT YAP, 62, EXECUTIVE CHAIRMAN OF LOGISTICS FIRM YCH, recalling the late Mr Lee urging Singapore firms to expand abroad



**WOMEN'S RIGHTS**  
"I was always financially independent. With my extra money, I could give my four children a more comfortable life."  
PART-TIME TEACHER ER TECK GIN, 67, who went to school, unlike her older sister

## THE SINGAPORE HE BUILT

## He changed my life

'It pained me to sit across the table over several years and watch Mr Lee weaken. He was the founding father of Singapore. I liked to remember him as the vigorous Prime Minister in television footage, or at least as the still active Minister Mentor in 2009 who told us no question was off limits, and hurried us to complete our book, chiding us not to let the grass grow under our feet.'

CHUA MUI HOONG



## My father and our founding father

Over time, both distant, disapproving figures turned into real beings I could relate to

Chua Mui Hoong  
Opinion Editor

When I was growing up, God, my father and Lee Kuan Yew all merged into one.

I was the youngest child in a Teochew-speaking, working-class Chinese household. My parents were immigrants from China, who ran a hawkker stall for much of my formative years.

My father was a stern patriarch who was not averse to using the cane. My mother was a traditional Chinese wife and self-sacrificing mother, with a twinkling sense of humour with those close to her. She tended to our household altar, placing platters of food there on religious or festive days. She prayed to the deity who I found out years later is supposed to be the Kitchen God, assigned by the Emperor of Heaven to report on a family's doings. The offerings were meant to placate the deity and sweeten his tongue when he delivered reports.

As for Lee Kuan Yew, he was just the man who founded the nation that I heard and read about. Like God, he was everywhere in the ether. Like God, he was all-powerful and all-knowing. Lee Kuan Yew didn't affect my family's life much in a direct way, although his policies formed the arc within which ordinary lives like ours were lived.

My parents were street hawkers who were fined repeatedly for peddling their wares. Unlike many hawkers grateful to be relocated, they resisted being put into a

centre for years. When the frequency of fines grew too overwhelming, they gave up. By then, choice sites like Newton were taken up; they were sent to Timbaktu—a small hawkker centre off Alexandra Road, where they struggled to make enough to raise three children.

Apart from the way big policies of the day intersected with our lives, mine was not a political family. The closest I came to Lee Kuan Yew was hearing my father tell the story of how he was standing close by and witnessed the (to him) historic moment when Mr Lee was pushed into a big monsoon drain at Towner Road, while touring Kallang constituency in 1963.

Lee Kuan Yew  
close up

I first watched Lee Kuan Yew close up in 1983, when I was 15. By then, my parents could afford a second-hand black-and-white TV set. Sitting in the living room, I watched his National Day Rally speech live.

I didn't know it then, but this was his famous speech on graduate mothers. It went on into the night, and I remember I was fidgeted, moving from the sofa to toilet reluctantly for pee breaks.

In junior college, we would discuss Lee Kuan Yew and Singapore politics incessantly. At 18, I won a Public Service Commission Overseas Merit Scholarship to study English literature at Cambridge University in England.

Like hundreds of exam-smart Singaporeans from poor families, who got government scholarships that opened doors to good careers, I am a beneficiary of the meritocratic scholarship system Mr Lee created.

In my case, though I was contracted to work in the civil service for eight years after my studies, I broke my bond. I approached Singapore Press Holdings, which agreed to hire me and buy out my bond. I remember walking to the Public Service Commission with the SPH cheque for \$140,000 that bought my freedom from the civil service. I have remained grateful to SPH ever since. After 24 years, I still love my job as a journalist.

When I joined The Straits Times Political Desk in 1991, Lee Kuan Yew became less of a myth, and much more real.

Over the years, I would cover Mr Lee on many occasions, including in Singapore, at Tanjong Pagar and in Parliament, and overseas, in China and Malaysia.

Videos of him in the 1970s show a gruff, thuggish figure with an aggressive chin thrust, given to raised arms, finger-pointing and trouser-hiking. By the time I met him, from the mid-1990s, he was already in his 70s and 80s, and had mellowed considerably.

Fery rhetoric

But when required, his oratory was just as fiery as ever.

Two parliamentary speeches in the last 20 years stood out for me. One was in November 1994. After hours of debate on the proposal to peg ministers' pay to top private-sector professionals', including a

suggestion to put the proposal to a referendum, Mr Lee rose and put an end to it, saying: "I am pitting my judgment after 40 years in politics, and I've been in this chamber since 1955, against all the arguments on the other side... against all the arguments of the doubters can muster."

Enough said. Done deal. In 1996, there were complaints about property purchases by Mr Lee and his son Hsien Loong, then the Deputy Prime Minister. Amid the unhappiness about ministers having an "inside track" to VIP priority bookings for condominiums, it took Mr Lee to call a spade a spade.

Businesses want to get the best customers to help sell and add value to their products, he said, adding: "Let us be realistic... I ask all of you to be honest, including Mr Chiam (See Tong). All ministers who carry weight, all MPs who are popular, you go to a hawkker centre. If they gave the other customer one egg, they'll give you two. Count on it."

In words that entered the lexicon of Mr Lee's hard truths, he thundered in the House, telling MPs to be realistic that some people would return. "The searing experience tempered his character and made him more philosophical about his life. I think it has similarly tempered you."

I was touched by his good wishes for my health. He also shared about the time his son went through chemotherapy, 11 years earlier, and how one lived with the uncertainty, even in remission, of whether the cancer would return. "The searing experience tempered his character and made him more philosophical about his life. I think it has similarly tempered you."

He also sent me a note in June 2010 to say he enjoyed reading my book Pioneers Once More, a history of the Singapore public

service. He offered some vignettes of senior civil servants that he said I could include in future editions. Again, I was touched by his generous words, and that he bothered.

I began to see a lot more of Mr Lee from December 2008 to October 2009, when my colleagues and I conducted 16 interviews with him for Hard Truths. He was vigorous, engaging, sometimes a little testy, but never rude or nasty.

I heard him speak of his wife and his daily ritual of reading to her when she lay bedridden after a stroke. Devoid of her company, he would converse with the nurses during lunch. I heard the stoic loneliness in his voice after she died. I saw the indulgent grandfather reluctant to forbid his grandchildren to touch his things when they snaffled, but who would discreetly wipe down his computer with disinfecting wipes after they left so as not to catch their bug.

Although he was reputed for having no small talk, he sometimes told us about his ailments or his day.

I covered Mrs Lee's funeral in October 2010 at Mandai Crematorium. He walked up to her coffin with a single red rose. His hand touched his lips, then her forehead, planting a kiss there once, and then, as though he could not bear to part, again.

Somewhere along the line amid those incidents, I grew fond of the old man. In 2012, I was involved in another round of interviews for the book One Man's View Of The World. Last year, we interviewed him a few more times to update the book. He grew visibly more frail over the years. From open-buttoned jackets, he moved on to buttoned-up ones, sometimes with a scarf around the neck. From walking in his trainers, he had to be supported.

We once had to wait 30 minutes for him to rest and he apologised, saying he had not been able to keep his food down. He had an injury once, and conducted the interview with a heat pad around his thigh. He was on meal supplements and various medications his security officers would give him. His speech got slurred towards the end. From over two hours, the interviews went down to 45 minutes or less.

It pained me to sit across the table over several years and watch Mr Lee weaken. He was the founding father of Singapore. I liked to remember him as the vigorous Prime Minister in television footage, or at least as the still active Minister Mentor in 2009, who told us no question was off limits, and hurried us to complete our book, chiding us not to let the grass grow under our feet.

But somewhere along the line, I came to see him less as Lee Kuan Yew the mythic figure, the great statesman, the fearsome political leader. I came to see him as a man, a flawed but still great man, a man who did his best for his country, for his time, the best he knew how.

Luckily for all of us, his best was enough.

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Ms Chua Mui Hoong with her parents at Changi Airport before she took her first plane ride to Cambridge University to take up a government scholarship.

conference, or sat across a table from him in an interview. I would put aside those thoughts and focus on the issue at hand.

In any case, I usually had my colleagues around me. I wasn't a political opponent. I was a journalist, and I knew Mr Lee respected the role of journalists. Much as he might berate us or our editors when he disagreed with something we wrote, he knew our job was to ask honest, if difficult, and to him annoying, questions. And while the Singapore Government can be authoritarian, it respects the rule of law.

I once asked if he was satisfied with the level of political contest, or if he should have done more to create the conditions for an alternative in Singapore.

His answer: "We'll be quite happy if we get a small group of equal calibre contesting against us. I mean you look at the NMPs, they talk more sense, right? Would they fight an election? No. So? But they've got the brain power, they've got the knowledge, but they're not prepared to jump into the sea."

My counter: "That's because many people are intimidated by the PAP, the climate of fear, crackdown on dissent, and so on."

Mr Lee: "No, no. Are you intimidated?" Me: "Well, asking you to add that there's a perception."

Mr Lee went on to just that if a person joined an opposition party, "he takes us on, we'll take him on. But you can't join the Workers' Party and we just let him lambast us away. We'll demolish him as hard as he tries to demolish us. That's part of the game, right? I mean you say that's intimidation?"

Growing fond

I don't remember when exactly I started to get fond of him. It was certainly after my conversion to Christianity, when my concept

## HOUSING: The wonder of taps, the fear of lifts

Chong Zi Liang

When Madam Hap Cheng Lay moved into a Housing Board rental flat in 1972, she felt a mixture of excitement and fear.

The mother of two young boys was eager to leave the attap house she had been sharing with another family.

However, there was just one problem: Her new home was on the 10th storey.

"I was really scared of entering the lift the first time. Who knew what would happen when the doors closed?" she recalled.

But taking the lift soon became a routine, and she grew to enjoy being 10 floors up.

"It was breezy being that high up. I no longer had to live in a stuffy kampung house."

Madam Hap, now 71, is among hundreds of thousands of Singapore families who have benefited from the country's public housing programme.

When Mr Lee Kuan Yew became Prime Minister of self-governing Singapore in 1959, his Government embarked on a massive and urgent building programme.

In three years, the newly formed HDB built about 26,000 flats, more

than its predecessor, the Singapore Improvement Trust, had built in 32 years.

Mr Lee also pushed for home ownership instead of rental, saying in his memoirs, From Third World To First, that during the riots in the 1950s and early 1960s, people would destroy cars and other property.

But they acted differently during riots in the mid-1960s after they owned homes and property.

Mr Lee saw young men carrying their scooters to safety up the stairs of their HDB blocks.

"I believed that a deep sense of property was instinctive in a person," he wrote.

"I was strengthened in my resolve to give every family solid assets which I was confident they would protect and defend, especially their home."

By the time Mr Lee stepped down as Prime Minister in 1990, eight in 10 Singaporeans were living in HDB flats.

Today, Madam Hap is among 90 per cent of HDB dwellers who own their homes.

Recalling her kampung days in Bukit Panjang, she said she shared a house with wooden walls and a zinc roof with about 30 people.

There was no electricity or running water.

Candles were used at night.

Water had to be fetched in pails from a well about 250m away from the village.

"The streets were completely dark at night. We had to carry candles shielded by newspapers in case the flame went out," she said.

After she got married, life hardly improved as she shared another attap house with another family.

She still had to get water from a public tap by the roadside.

All that changed in 1972, when she moved into her first HDB flat that was rented for about \$70 a month.

"You can't imagine what a difference it makes to have water coming out of a tap in your own home. Before that, even something as simple as brushing your teeth was a chore," she said.

Meanwhile, she made a living selling kueh illegally until 1975, when she rented a drinks stall at a hawkker centre.

She worked from 6am to midnight almost daily.

"The other stallholders said, 'There's only 24 hours a day and you're working 18 of them, don't be too hard on yourself,'" she recalled.

But she had two young sons and



Madam Hap Cheng Lay, 71, in her four-room Jurong West flat which she bought for \$60,000 in 1982. It was a big improvement over the attap house with no running water which she shared with another family after getting married.

her businessman husband was a gambler.

Her hard work and thrift enabled her to buy a \$60,000 four-room flat in Jurong West in 1982, where she has been living since.

These days, she works only in the morning, leaving a helper to run the stall till 9pm.

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Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015

## WOMEN'S EDUCATION: When doors to equality opened

Rachel Chang

Assistant Political Editor

Madam Er Teck Gin, 67, was a woman born at the right time.

Her older sister stayed at home in the 1950s while her brothers went to school, as was the norm at the time.

But when Madam Er reached school-going age, a man named Lee Kuan Yew emerged as the leader of the fledgling nation, then still seeking its independence from the British. He called on families to send their children—both boys and girls—to school, to forge the foundation of an educated and effective workforce.

Madam Er's parents heeded the call. So, unlike her older sister, she and her younger sisters went to school with their brothers. It changed the course of their lives.

"My older sister was a housewife. But I've always worked, my whole adult life," said Madam Er, who is now a grandmother of four.

"I was always financially independent. With my extra money, I could give my four chil-

dren a more comfortable life."

More than that, Madam Er, introduced to learning in those early years, never stopped going to class.

She started working after secondary school, helping out with her friends' businesses.

In the evenings, she went for English lessons.

Soon, she was able to get better and better jobs, like being a cold chef preparing non-cooked food in Raffles Hotel. From there, she joined the Singapore Food Industries as an executive chef.

Her husband worked in a pawn shop, then later, for a transport company, so the family of six thrived as a double-income household.

Today, Madam Er teaches cooking classes part-time at community clubs under the People's Association.

"I followed Mr Lee's advice," she said. "Education is everything."

Women of Madam Er's age gained from Mr Lee's People's Action Party (PAP) government aggressively promoting gender equality in education and the workforce.

The impetus was largely eco-

nom, as the new and vulnerable nation needed to raise its national output and boost its economy quickly.

So, Mr Lee and his colleagues urged women to leave the kitchen for office desks or factory assembly lines—or at least bring up daughters to fulfill that goal.

But the PAP also believed in gender equality as a principle. Mr Lee's party fielded women candidates for elections, such as Women's League founders Chan Choy Siong and Ho Puay Choo.

Madam Er remembers well the late Madam Chan, who was married to former education minister Ong Pang Boon, now 85. "It was quite wonderful to see her in the papers, in charge," she said.

These days, women should come out and support themselves."

Gender equality also quickly became enshrined in law. In 1961, the Women's Charter was passed. It was a monumental ahead-of-its-time piece of civil rights legislation—was passed.

Crafted by then Labour and Law Minister K. M. Byrne and used through a Legislative Assembly con-

## CRITICAL BATTLES: Letting go of past, but not forgetting it

Ignatius Low

Managing Editor

Author and cartoonist Otto Fong did not join the thousands of Singaporeans standing in line for hours to pay their last respects to Singapore founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew.

"When I was a kid, my dad was banned from entering Singapore. I had to live in Malaysia and study in Singapore so I stood in line at the Customs for 10 years, back and forth daily," he wrote in a Facebook post last week.

"I think I've done enough queuing for Lee Kuan Yew."

Among the many stories of how Singaporeans' lives changed for the better as a result of Mr Lee's political decisions, the 46-year-old stands in stark contrast.

His father is Mr Fong Swee Suan, a former union leader who became a key member of the People's Action Party, but left the party in 1961 over differences in opinion about Singapore's merger with Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. He was subsequently branded a communist and arrested in 1963 as part of Operation Cold Store, an anti-communist sting.

The 1955 Hock Lee Bus riots were also allegedly instigated by his father, together with fellow left-wing unionist Lim Chin Siang, although Mr Fong has repeatedly denied this.

After his arrest, Mr Fong's father was placed under detention across the Causeway in Muar and banned from entering Singapore.

"It was difficult because the family didn't have much savings, so my mum had to work in a stationery shop and take care of my very young sister, while still finding ways to go visit my dad in Muar," said Mr Fong.

He was born a year after his father was released in 1967. He said the family wanted to stay in Johor Bahru because his parents still wanted their children to be educated in Singapore, but the older Mr Fong could not find a job there initially because of his reputation.

That reputation also resulted in the family being shunned by everyone here. Mr Fong said that when he was growing up, he did not go to any Chinese New Year or extended-family gatherings.

"There was never any active harassment, only this fear in everyone's mind that I don't want to be seen with this person."

The isolation spilled over into Mr Fong's social life as a student in Singapore.

"Your friends would ask you to watch a movie and you have to say you can't because you have to catch the bus home to JB," he said.

Mr Fong remembers that his moment of realisation when he saw a political cartoon by Singaporean artist Morgan Chua depicting his father and Mr Lim as crazed "broth-

ers-in-lawlessness".

"It was like that moment in Star Wars movie The Empire Strikes Back when Luke discovers that Darth Vader is his father," said Mr Fong. "It created a lot of confusion and I blamed my dad for wasting his time in politics."

The ban on his father entering Singapore was eventually lifted in 1990, but it was only a few years ago, in their old age, that Mr Fong's parents finally returned.

"My dad would not have been able to do that if he had clung on to the past," said Mr Fong.

"In fact, my parents made it a point to shield us from the past, so that we could grow up with a clean slate."

He added: "My mum used to say that when she was younger, she was very angry and wanted to outlive Lee Kuan Yew. But now, she says that was such a meaningless thing to hold on to."

The older Mr Fong eventually penned a memoir, which was released in 2009. A copy was sent to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who thanked them for the book in a letter that was signed personally.

Mr Fong said that there is no reason to feel resentful about the past. "It was not a bad life for me. I am glad I did not have to share my dad with a million other urgent national issues, should history have turned out differently," he told The Sunday Times.

"I'm also a beneficiary of the Sin-



Madam Er Teck Gin's parents heeded Mr Lee's call to send their children—both boys and girls—to school. So, unlike her older sister, she and her younger sisters went to school with their brothers. It changed the course of their lives.

trolled by the PAP, the Charter guaranteed basic rights and protection, which women today take for granted as the natural order of things.

These protections included a married woman's right to use her

maiden name, her right to own property and her right to be a man's sole legal wife.

"It was very hard for Chinese-educated people like us to find jobs at the time. But because we had some

education, we could survive," said Madam Er of herself and her sisters. "And we had the same opportunities as the men."

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Author and cartoonist Otto Fong with his father, former political detainee Fong Swee Suan, 84. Growing up was difficult for Mr Fong because of his father's reputation but he says there is no reason to feel resentful about the past.

gapore system," added the Chinese High School and Hwa Chong Junior College old boy. "It's not a perfect system but it's not a bad system, and one that works better than many others."

And despite the history between Mr Lee and his father, Mr Fong is full of admiration for the founding Prime Minister.

"Don't forget Singapore, at the time, was under the influence of many strong forces, so to make things work in a short time, you re-

ally had to be the strongman and a bigger, more unreasonable force. Even the gangsters will have to fear you, in order to push things through peacefully," he said.

"He may not have been the originator of every idea and people may not agree with him, but he was able to stand there and say, 'This is the issue that I stand behind and if you have a problem, you deal with me.' I thought that was pretty cool."

But what of his family's reaction to Mr Lee's passing?

"We did not say anything. It had all been said before," said Mr Fong. "But as I looked at everyone queuing up, I wondered how many of them would do the same thing for their loved ones while they were still alive."

"There is a difference between forgiving and forgetting," he added. "Forgiving is about letting go, forgetting is not healthy for history."

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## THE SINGAPORE HE BUILT

## He changed my life

'At my workplace we had a roof garden, and I would go there every afternoon. My colleagues laughed because I seemed very odd – the designers were all very indoor people.'

ANUJ JAIN

## CLEAN & GREEN CITY: The seed project that took root



When Mr Anuj Jain moved from his "concrete city" home town in India to Singapore to study engineering, he was so taken by the country's greenery that he ended up joining the Nature Society full time and helping the authorities to protect the island's flourishing greenery.

**Feng Zengkun**  
Environment Correspondent

When you visit Orchard Road these days, you can enjoy a brush with a butterfly along with your shopping. A 4km Butterfly Trail starts at the gates of the Botanic Gardens, continues down the premier shopping belt and ends at Fort Canning Park. It was Mr Lee Kuan Yew's go-green campaign in 1963 – when he planted a tree at Farrer Circus – that started what was to become the City in a Garden concept which flourishes today. Decades after Mr Lee planted that first tree, a young Indian who arrived to study here was so inspired by Singapore's rich fauna and flora that he went on to eventually work for the Nature Society, with a particular interest in butterflies and conservation.

One of Mr Anuj Jain's proudest achievements is the Butterfly Trail – a 2010 project which consists of a series

of green spaces along Napier, Tanglin and Orchard roads that help butterflies spread their wings through both leafy and glitzy areas in the heart of the city. The spaces include green areas next to Somerset MRT station and behind Ngee Ann City, and Dhoby Ghaut Green park. The Nature Society spearheaded the project, which was sponsored by property developer Far East Organization. Mr Jain, 30, was one of the lead project officers. He says: "A lot of companies and organisations such as Singapore Post and Ricoh (a Japanese electronics firm) were willing to help financially, in-kind or to give up some space on their property as a green area, and Mr Lee's policies over the years definitely helped foster that eco-friendly mindset." It is a far cry from when Mr Jain moved from his self-described "concrete city" home town in India to study at Nanyang Technological

University (NTU) in 2003. He recalls: "Even though India has amazing wildlife as a country, Indian cities are not very green. But when I came to Singapore, there was greenery everywhere." He was inspired to join Earthlink, NTU's environmental student society, and also to explore the nation's nature reserves and green spaces. MacRitchie Reservoir Park remains a favourite spot. Although Mr Jain completed his engineering course, and started work at an electronics design company, he yearned to be closer to greenery. "At my workplace we had a roof garden, and I would go there every afternoon. My colleagues laughed because I seemed very odd – the designers were all very indoor people." In 2008, he started volunteering with Team Seagrass, a group of people who monitor the health of seagrass, and the Nature Society. He also volunteered with National Parks Board, carrying out guided

walks on Pulau Ubin and in the Central Catchment and Bukit Timah nature reserves, as well as helping with biodiversity surveys and weed eradication programmes at the reserves. Eventually, in 2010, he quit his job and joined the Nature Society, Mr Jain was one of the founding volunteers trained by Dr Ho Hua Chew, vice-chairman of the society's conservation committee, to carry out guided walks in the Kranji Marsh. In late 2010, Sentosa Development Corporation hired the society for a botanical and zoological survey of the island. Mr Jain was also in the plant survey group that helped uncover tree species that are extinct on the mainland, including the *Strydom griffithii*, an evergreen tree. He became a permanent resident in 2007, and is finishing a doctorate on wildlife ecology and conservation at the National University of Singapore. [fzengkun@sph.com.sg](mailto:fzengkun@sph.com.sg)

## GOING REGIONAL: Pushing S'pore firms to expand overseas

**Marissa Lee**

It took a trade mission led by then Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew to turn Dr Robert Yap's company from local to global. Such missions were "new and few" in 1993. Dr Yap, executive chairman of logistics giant YCH, was head of a homegrown company that had just made its first foray out of Singapore with a warehouse in Penang. But YCH's multinational clients like Compaq and Hewlett-Packard were urging the firm to service them as they expanded into China. Dr Yap was hesitant. He recalled: "We knew China was going to be a growing market, we just needed a sign that it was the right thing to do. Because we were not a big company, we couldn't afford to make too many mistakes." The invitation to join the mission was just the sign he was looking for. Mr Lee had invited many businessmen to the trip to expose them to the China market. "We had a meeting, and Mr Lee said that China is a big market we

cannot ignore, because Singapore is too small," said Dr Yap, 62. "But of course, he cautioned that not all of us would succeed... "But the whole thing was about encouragement. There was a risk, but we needed to go." Mr Lee commanded a lot of respect from the Chinese officials and built the Singapore brand by keeping promises and working hard, said Dr Yap. "Lee Kuan Yew didn't say it that way, he acted that way." The Ningbo mission gave Dr Yap the courage to take YCH global. A year later, YCH opened a distribution park in Shanghai. It now operates distribution hubs in more than 100 cities worldwide. "Singapore is only 20 per cent of our business now," Dr Yap said. "(Singapore's) legacy of internationalisation – I would credit it to Lee Kuan Yew." In his role as Senior Minister, Mr Lee dwelt extensively on the need for Singapore firms to venture abroad to grow and survive. He told a People's Action Party (PAP) conference in 1992: "We are being left behind by (South) Korea,



YCH executive chairman Robert Yap says a trade mission led by Mr Lee gave him courage to take YCH global.

Taiwan and Hong Kong, which are developing their external economies. "All we've got are a few enterprises in Malaysia, mostly in Johor, and a few factories and hotels in Batam

and Bintan in Indonesia." If Singaporeans are "contented to be stuck at home" instead of internationalising, warned Mr Lee, Singapore would be a "failed NIE (newly industrialising economy)". Mr Lee threw his weight behind the regionalisation drive. He wanted Singapore firms to develop "guanxi", or close relations, with rising Chinese businesses. Dr Yap first saw Mr Lee in action in the 1960s, when he was just a lad who went along with his father on a job. The elder Mr Yap, who owned a lorry transport business, supplied vehicles to the PAP during an election campaign. "My father had very, very high respect for Mr Lee," said Dr Yap. Later, when he took up the reins of his father's business and began transforming it into what is now YCH, Dr Yap began to share his father's deep respect for Mr Lee. "I appreciated him better as a businessman – when you look at the stability in Singapore, and take advantage of the Singapore position," he said. [marilee@sph.com.sg](mailto:marilee@sph.com.sg)

## CLEAN WATER: The big upgrade from wells to taps

**Charissa Yong**

When retired accounts clerk Ow Yong Weng Kok, now 72, was a teenager in the early 1960s, he lived in a kampung in Kim Keat. The only source of fresh water was a well in a village a kilometre away – and Mr Ow Yong walked there and back every day. On the return trip he carried two full buckets of water on a pole balanced on his shoulders.

Mr Ow Yong's 39-year-old son, Chark Kan, said: "The roads were very muddy and there weren't any street lamps. He was literally walking in darkness." Mr Ow Yong had recounted his tough childhood last week to him, after the death of Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

He told how this changed when Mr Lee visited the kampung in the 1960s, and asked the villagers if there was anything he could do for them.

The younger Mr Ow Yong, a private tutor, said his dad replied: "Tap water would be great."

Within a month, there was a tap for every two homes in the kampung. Mr Ow Yong said: "That was what I was amazed about – that Mr Lee took action straight away."

Years later, the first Housing

Board flat which the older Mr Ow Yong moved into had multiple taps from which potable water flowed.

The change from drawing water from common wells to potable tap water in every home was made across Singapore as Mr Lee strove to improve standards of living.

Mr Lee also spearheaded the drive for Singapore to be self-sufficient in water.

This was born out of a sense of vulnerability, intensified by a drought in 1963 and Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965. Two 30-year water pacts signed in 1961 and 1962 that allowed Singapore to buy water from Malaysia were drafted into the Separation Agreement and later became part of the Malaysian Constitution, guaranteeing Singapore's water supply from Johor.

Going a step further, Mr Lee set up the Water Planning Unit in 1971 to coordinate Singapore's water policy.

Soon, Singapore also developed other ways to recycle water, such as desalination and treating waste water.

"The one thing that struck me about my father's story was how we always take what we have now for granted, such as running tap water," said Mr Ow Yong.

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Villagers in Adam Park washing clothes near a well. In the early 1960s, people who lived in kampungs had to draw water from common wells. In an effort to improve standards of living across Singapore, Mr Lee ensured that homes had access to taps from which potable water flowed.



Mr Tan Tong Hai receiving an NTUC Comfort bursary in 1984 from Mr Ong Teng Cheong, who was then NTUC's secretary-general.

## MERITOCRACY: Poor boy grows up to be StarHub boss

**Irene Tham**  
Technology Correspondent

Growing up, Mr Tan Tong Hai and his five siblings lived in a one-room rental flat in Redhill with their parents.

The home was bare, furnished with just a table and some chairs. They could not afford a TV set.

A typical meal was rice with black soya sauce. His clothes and school books were hand-me-downs from a neighbour or his brother.

The 1960s was a tumultuous period in Singapore history, with a weak economy, very high unemployment and widespread poverty.

Mr Tan remembers his mother, an illiterate, regularly exhorting her six children: "Study hard and be successful. Don't let people look down on you."

Now aged 51, he is the chief executive of StarHub. His home? A landed property in the high-end Holland Road area.

Mr Tan credits his success story to the "solid foundation" provided by Singapore's education system.

"I was one of the beneficiaries of the system, which lifted me from poverty to where I am today," he said.

The emphasis the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew placed on education is legendary as the Government saw it as pivotal in creating a quality workforce to grow the country's economy and improve people's lives.

Mr Tan's parents sent all their six children to Tiong Bahru Primary School.

Though school fees were "affordable", he said, his late father's earnings as a caddy were not enough to buy new school textbooks, uniforms and shoes for all his children.

Mr Tan credits his achievements to Singapore's meritocratic education system.

His first job was at multinational IBM, as a software engineer, and with his first pay, he helped his parents buy an HDB flat in Bishan in 1989. The entire family moved into the four-room flat.

It has since been sold and his mother, now 80, lives with one of his siblings.

Mr Tan credits his achievements to Singapore's meritocratic education system.

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Mr S. Rajagopal rose through the ranks and retired as Superintendent of Police in 1995.

## LAW & ORDER: Glad gangsterism was curtailed

**Walter Sim**

As a teenager in the 1950s, Mr S. Rajagopal was struck by the forceful speeches of the politician who would eventually become Singapore's first Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

Listening to them, "you knew that in his mind the safety of the people was paramount because gangsterism (then) was rife", said Mr Rajagopal, who is now 75 and an honorary treasurer of the Singapore Police Retirees' Association.

Around the same time, communist activity was reaching a peak.

Mr Rajagopal watched as Mr Lee quelled the communists and reduced gangsterism.

Having lived through the Hock Lee bus riots in 1955, Mr Rajagopal knew first-hand the chaos of lawlessness.

"During the riots, 'the police riot squad came and they chased everybody away. But I got kicked by one of the rioters because I was just a young boy standing there", he said.

"After that I told myself, 'Bloody hell, I'll become a policeman myself.'"

Despite his father's disapproval, he went ahead and did so.

His resolve was over his taxi driver father, who brought him food, and drove him home after he took up night school.

The 36-year veteran of the police force was involved in key moments of Singapore's tumultuous history.

He was part of the security team at Mr Lee's Oxley Road home from 1959 to 1960, at a time when the communist movement was active.

Then came Operation Cold-

store, which was a major crackdown on leftists in 1963, racial riots in 1964, and the Laju ferry hijacking incident in 1973, among others.

Mr Rajagopal lauded Mr Lee for his decisiveness in making pivotal decisions, saying that "he saved our lives" during the Laju incident. But he said he could not go into detail given the classified nature of the operation.

Another key move was the retention of the Internal Security Act – a legacy of British colonial rule – which quelled uprisings over the years.

Through it all, Mr Lee's standards of "hard work, discipline, truth, no corruption" formed Mr Rajagopal's credo.

And he never faltered: "In my entire career, I've never touched 10 cents from anyone."

He rose through the ranks to retire as Superintendent of Police in 1995.

Today, 20 years after leaving the police force, Mr Lee's words are still a resounding "clarion call", said Mr Rajagopal. He cited Mr Lee as saying: "I've worked all my life to protect the country and the people of Singapore."

Mr Rajagopal added: "Now in Singapore we have rehabilitated the communists, the criminals, the Muslim fundamentalists. That is why Singapore is such a peaceful place with racial and religious harmony. It is only due to an effective leader."

Should his services be required, he remains ever prepared for the call of duty.

"We in the Police Retirees' Association – and we've got 1,636 members – will all respond if we get a call any time."

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Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015

## BILINGUALISM: From hard slog to rewarding career



Ms Wong Lee Jeng is "enjoying my work as event host, translator and writer now, thanks to my good grasp of the two languages".

Up till her Secondary One year, Ms Wong Lee Jeng's school was a public Chinese-language institution. Then, overnight, all the textbooks – except those in the Chinese language – were changed into English. This was in 1981, at the former Seh Chuan High School. It was the transitional period when the Education Ministry was developing national schools with English as the language of instruction. It was the brainchild of then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew, an advocate of bilingualism which was introduced in the late 1970s. The thinking behind it was that English would connect Singaporeans to the world and give all races an equal chance while knowing their mother tongue would help them in touch with their culture. Ms Wong, now 47, struggled at first, not knowing that the move would pave the way for her career. She went on to become a Mandarin radio DJ and television presenter, and is now a translator and trainer as well as bilingual host at public events. She hosted the ground-breaking ceremony of the China Cultural Centre in 2010 in Queen Street, officiated by then Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong and Mr Xi Jinping, now China's President. She did the same at the opening of the Confucius Institute at Nanyang Technological University in 2006. It was attended by Mr Lee, then Minister Mentor. Ms Wong says: "In my first two years in the school, our teachers were still teaching us in Mandarin through our textbooks, especially those for science and mathematics, were in English." The complete switch from Chinese to English took place when she was in Secondary Three. All vernacular language

schools, including Seh Chuan, which was renamed Shuqun Secondary in 1986 when it moved from Upper Bukit Timah to Jurong Street 21, became full-fledged national schools by 1987.

They taught English at first language level, mother tongue languages at second language level. The exceptions were nine former Chinese-medium schools, which became Special Assistance Plan or SAP schools in 1978.

Ms Wong, who later completed her A levels at the former Raffles Junior College, recalls taking the change at Seh Chuan in her stride, but some classmates "dropped out of school after failing to show up for their O-level examinations".

It was also hard on the teaching staff: Chinese-educated science teachers found themselves having to teach complex chemistry theories in English.

Luckily for Ms Wong, her principal engaged an American, Mr Alan Smith, a staff member at the US embassy, to give students English enrichment lessons.

"He introduced us to English literature, too, like the works of H.G. Wells which I became very interested in, and helped improve my English further," she says.

Although a science student, she began her career as a Chinese copy writer at an advertising firm after her A levels in 1987.

Her parents were construction workers and Ms Wong, the fourth of six children, had to start work and help support the family.

She went on to become a full-time DJ, radio producer and Chinese-English translator. In 2006, she and her musician husband Tan Tong Jen, 46, formed a media services company, Six Degrees Connection. They have two daughters, aged 14 and 11.

She declares: "I am enjoying my work as event host, translator and writer now, thanks to my good grasp of the two languages."

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## THE SINGAPORE HE BUILT

## He changed my life

'My Chinese Singaporean wife and our two happily bi-cultural "Chindian" kids are similarly blessed. So I give thanks daily and can say, with only a little exaggeration, I owe it all to Mr Lee. But my personal blessings are just the start of what I really want to say: the biggest blessing is Mr Lee himself.'

PATRICK DANIEL



## RACIAL EQUALITY: Meritocratic system gives everyone a chance

Nur Asyiqin Mohamad Salleh  
Charissa Yong

When she was a primary school pupil, Ms Nadrah Sadali would often go down at night to the void deck of her family's Housing Board flat to study.

She did so because her family could hardly afford to pay their electricity bills.

Her mother would also go to Beach Road to buy second-hand textbooks for Ms Nadrah and her five brothers.

The worn books were passed from sibling to sibling until the school syllabus changed and newer editions were needed.

Her mother, a nurse, and her father, an Islamic finance business owner, worked hard to put all their six children through school.

But Ms Nadrah, 25, and a trainee teacher, said she believes she owes part of her progress to the country's meritocratic system, a pillar of Singapore society that founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew and his team built and reinforced in education and employment.

The former national hockey player said being a minority did not stand in the way for her to excel, whether in her studies or sport.

"Today, as I train to be an educator, I have neither been discriminated against nor had to worry about possible discrimination."

The insistence by Mr Lee and the Old Guard on equal opportunities in education for all Singaporeans to progress by dint of hard work and not by race, religion, descent or place of birth, is enshrined in Singapore's Constitution.

Also, financial aid from the Government and community groups is readily available for bright students from low-income households.

Still, there was always the nagging worry of whether her parents could afford the school fees, she said.

It is a feeling I carried through my school years, from Juying Primary to Crescent Girls' Secondary and St Andrews Junior College.

"It was always at the back on my mind, especially in my JC years as most of my classmates came from families that could send them to an overseas university," she said.

"But I remember my mother telling me that if I do well enough, the system will find a way to help me."

"True enough, with only my academic credentials, I qualified for uni-

versity," she added.

"It did not matter that I could not afford the fees, it did not matter that I was Malay, and it most definitely did not matter that I was a woman," said Ms Nadrah, who is second among six children.

She took a bank loan for her first three years at Nanyang Technological University, where she majored in sociology.

In her final year, she got a Mendaki scholarship that took care of her course fees.

Currently, she is studying for a post-graduate diploma in education (physical education). The fees for the course are fully paid by the National Institute of Education.

She said: "We reap what we sow, and the system of meritocracy pushes us along the way."

She also acknowledged the value of the bilingual policy in schools, which is invariably associated with Mr Lee.

The policy requires each child to learn his mother tongue as well as English, and it is something Ms Nadrah said helped to remind her of her cultural roots.

She was an active member of the Malay Society in each school she attended as well as in university.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF NADRAH SADALI

tended as well as in university. "The bilingual policy had plenty to do with it," she added. "The emphasis on our mother tongue encouraged me to not just speak and learn the lan-

guage but also retain the values that come with it."

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## NATIONAL SERVICE: Father, son and nation's defence

Jermyn Chow  
Defence Correspondent

The father is the longest-serving staff member in the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF). The son worked as a medical officer in the RSAF. Neither knew, as young men, how meaningful they would find the experience.

Fate, and Mr Lee Kuan Yew, intervened.

Back in 1967, 19-year-old Prasad Kumar Menon had set his sights on getting a law degree at the University of Singapore, when the British announced they were withdrawing their military presence from Singapore by 1971.

Mr Lee and his team decided the Republic should protect itself with its own resources. An air force had to be built from scratch.

Mr Menon signed up as a trainee pilot but ended up as an air traffic controller. "I felt it was my duty at a time when my country needed me to do the right thing," he said.

When he stopped at 52, he was immediately engaged as a consultant in the RSAF's air operations department. Today, he is the RSAF's longest-serving staff member.

He said the way in which the RSAF has soared bore testament to the spirit which Mr Lee invoked in a 1967 parliamentary speech, asking Singaporeans



PHOTO: MINDEF  
Mr Prasad Kumar Menon (seated), a trainee in 1969, assisting air traffic controllers at the Seletar Air Base control tower. His son Raj Kumar (above).

to "adapt and to adjust, without any whimpering or wringing of hands" when British forces withdrew.

Mr Menon said: "Being forced to start from scratch, and think out of the box so early on, made us mature very quickly."

Interestingly, when his son Raj Kumar was growing up, he did not take national service seriously at first.

"It's something you just had to do—

become fit, to be garang (Malay for tough), like what you see in the Ah Boys to Men films," said the 34-year-old, who went through basic military training in 2000, before interrupting his NS stint to go to medical school.

Reality hit when he returned to the RSAF to serve as a medical officer in 2006.

He helped evacuate servicemen who were hurt in a fighter jet crash in Taiwan in 2007.

Two died at the site, while another died from severe burns 17 days later in Singapore.

Recalling the 20-minute journey to the hospital in an ambulance with one of the burn victims airlifted back to Singapore, Mr Raj said: "All the drills, the equipment checks, things that we used to do in the medical centre and training, were suddenly very real."

"In front of you was someone who had made a big sacrifice while serving the nation. You wanted to do your best to bring him home."

Mr Raj is now a registrar at National University Hospital's general surgery department. But he often mentors junior SA medical officers and medics.

He said: "NS is not lip-service. You believe in your mission because you realise that this is not for show. This is essential."

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PHOTO: MINDEF

## HAWKER CENTRES: Dad gained a livelihood and raised a family

Lim Yan Liang

Growing up, Ms Thian Hwee Keong used to sit by the Geylang River and watch as her father roasted coffee beans in a huge bronze drum.

An itinerant hawker, her late father Thian Cayin Mu was known around the Kallang area in the 1960s for his coffee beans, which he painstakingly selected and processed.

This meant that large gunny sacks of green coffee beans were a constant fixture in the living room of the family's two-room rental flat in Dakota Crescent, she said.

"Once every fortnight, he would roll this heavy drum from our home to the river, which was about a five-minute walk away," recalled Ms Thian, who has three brothers.

"My brothers and I would pick up wooden planks for the fire, and I'd sit by the riverbank to watch him roast the coffee seeds. It was always a great fire."

When the green coffee beans turned brown, Mr Thian would stir them in margarine and sugar, before packing them in biscuit tins and sending them to a factory to be ground into powder.

The scent of roasted coffee meant her father was known in their neighbourhood as "kopi-cheek" (coffee uncle), laughed Ms Thian, 61, who works in patient administration at the Singapore General Hospital.

While the drinks business had its share of loyal customers, Ms Thian remembers how poor her family was.

"We had one table and one chair

when we first moved in," recalled Ms Thian. "My mother said if we saved money, we could buy one chair every month. So they bought the chairs one by one. That's how poor we were."

Her parents also had to contend with the authorities, who did not look kindly on street hawkers because of hygiene and public order problems in the 1960s.

"Thousands would sell cooked food on the pavements and streets in total disregard of traffic, health or other considerations," said Mr Lee.

"The resulting litter and dirt, the stench of rotting food and the clutter and obstructions turned many parts of the city into slums."

To clamp down on such hawking, officers would conduct spot checks and street hawkers would be fined, said Ms Thian.

"My father had kakis (friends) who kept an eye out, and when we heard the words 'officers coming, faster closer', we would pack up in a hurry and leave," she said. "But sometimes, he would be caught and fined."

After independence in 1965, Mr Lee's Government made a clean and modern Singapore a priority, and relocated hawkers like Mr Thian away from the main streets.

He set up his first permanent stall near Kallang Road, a row of zinc-roofed hawker stalls built by the Government. Rent was heavily subsidised and, for the first time, he had access to piped water, gas and electricity.

This meant he could run his business later into the night, and expand

his fare to include toast, boiled eggs and a selection of cold drinks.

"He became a legal tenant, and no longer had to hide from the inspectors. It was from here that my father started to prosper," said Ms Thian.

Mr Thian was among 18,000 street hawkers licensed by the Government in an island-wide hawker registration exercise in 1968 and 1969.

They had to stick to rules such as not smoking while preparing food, and not throwing water or rubbish into drains. For Mr Thian, it was the end of his coffee roasting days, as the authorities deemed his bean roasting pollutive.

But while business boomed for Mr Thian, whose stall was located near a bus stop used by Malaysian tourists, many of his peers were reluctant to move into permanent spaces.

"Accustomed to doing business on the road rent-free and easily accessible to customers, they resisted moving to centres where they would have to pay rent and water and electricity charges," Mr Lee wrote in his memoirs.

Undeterred, the Government embarked on an aggressive programme in 1971 to build permanent facilities to house hawkers.

It also formed the Hawkers' Department Special Squad, conducting multiple raids daily to get rid of all illegal hawking. Within six months, the illegal hawking situation was under control.

In 1973, Mr Thian became one of the first hawkers to move into the newly built Old Airport Road Food Centre. The Government would build hawker centres at a breakneck pace, opening No. 103 in 1986.



ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

Mr Thian continued to sell coffee and toast at the same stall for the next 15 years.

On the back of coffee and toast, Ms Thian said, her father was eventually able to buy a whole coffee shop, as well their family's first private apartment in Joo Chiat in the 1970s.

He sold it and moved with the family into a semi-detached house in Tembeling Street, where one of her

brothers still lives today. "Mr Lee Kuan Yew gave my parents a livelihood, an opportunity to make a decent living and to raise four children," she said. "No words can express my gratitude to Mr Lee for taking us from poverty to prosperity. I will forever remember him, and may he rest in peace."

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# The unique blessing for Singapore that is Mr Lee

Country may yet attain the new golden era that he wished for young Singaporeans

Patrick Daniel  
Editor-in-Chief  
English/Malay/Tamil Media Group

As the daily throngs of Singaporeans of all races and ages paid their last respects to Mr Lee Kuan Yew last week, I found myself counting the ways we've been blessed in Mr Lee's Singapore.

The most profound is a blessing I share with so many Singaporeans: In our personal lives, and not just as a country, we each went from Third World to First in a single generation.

In my case, I went from a rented, wooden shophouse success possible? I would cite the powerful combination of two of Mr Lee's core values: multiculturalism and meritocracy.

I managed to win government scholarships because I was never discriminated against in getting access to opportunities, and I could compete purely on merit. I was incredibly fortunate to go to two overseas universities that I could otherwise only have dreamt of.

These same factors also explain how I got to be editor-in-chief, and why I've stayed in the profession for close to 30 years.

My Chinese Singaporean wife and our two happily bi-cultural "Chindian" kids are similarly blessed. So I give thanks daily and can say, with only a little exaggeration, I owe it all to Mr Lee.

But my personal blessings are just the start of what I really want to say: the biggest blessing is Mr Lee himself.

Had the stars not been aligned for us, a man so unique would not have been born in a small island one degree north of the Equator, and at precisely the right moment in our history.

Thus we've been blessed with a leader with the guile and guts to take on colonialists, communists and communists. Along with his like-minded team, he also had the sheer brass to build a conscript army, navy and air force from scratch – imagine that – to make sure this city-state never gets seized as a glittering prize by any captor.

Of course there were some mis-steps along the way, but that can't take away his record of exceptional governance.

All of this most people know, especially after the crash course in Singapore history we've been given last week. The only value I can add is to recount some media-related episodes to illustrate Mr Lee's unique skill in coming up with unique solutions.

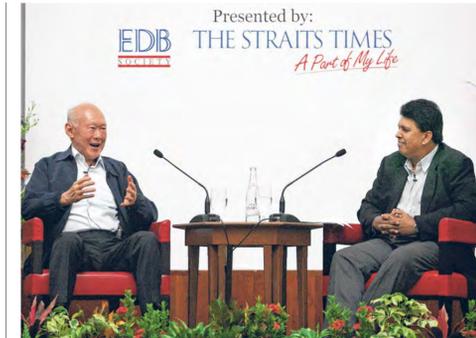
For six months from October 1993, I spent many days on a hard bench in a Singapore court fighting charges of breaching the Official Secrets Act (OSA). I was then editor of The Business Times and was hailed up for publishing the "flash estimate" of quarterly economic growth ahead of its official release.

Like most people, I was initially flummoxed by why the authorities would take live young professionals to court over this. The then Attorney-General (AG) prosecuted the case himself, even though it was being heard in a subordinate court.

In the midst of the long-running case, I was one day invited by Mr Lee, then Senior Minister, to lunch at the Istana, together with two other editors. It was for the OSA case, this wouldn't have been unusual, as he occasionally invited editors to lunch, to discuss issues and float a kite or two.

But that particular lunch was a touch surreal for me. Mr Lee of course made no reference to my OSA case, and I resisted all temptation to bring it up and was probably quieter than usual. Before we left, I thanked him for lunch, he nodded his acknowledgement.

At the conclusion of the case, we were all found guilty and fined – I paid \$4,000 – not least because the AG told the judge we were "humblebrags" with "honourable careers" and he was not



ST FILE PHOTO  
Mr Lee speaking at a seminar organised by EDB Society and The Straits Times at the Arts House in 2007. Mr Patrick Daniel (right) was the moderator.

He knew too well the power a press baron could wield to make or break an elected government, and he was determined to have none of it in Singapore. He made sure that political leaders are never beholden to unelected media owners, and wanted the media out of the political process. Foreign colleagues who have worked for capricious owners tell me how smart a move this was.

But one important thing had changed: Communicating information in breach of the OSA would henceforth not require proof of *mens rea*, or intention to commit the act. This was what the AG argued and won.

Why was this such a big deal? Because for several preceding years, Mr Lee had seen how his government, and Margaret Thatcher had lost case after case involving breaches of the British OSA.

One infamous case was the Spycatcher affair, where a former MI5 spy, Peter Wright, published an autobiography in Australia spilling a load of explosive British secrets. The Thatcher government failed in 1987 to persuade an Australian court that the book should be barred from publication. The UK law lords later ruled that the British press could publish extracts.

The ignominy was complete when the European Court of Human Rights found the UK government's actions had violated the right to freedom of speech. Meantime, the book went on to become a best-seller – I still have my copy.

The conclusion I came to was that our case had been used – brilliantly, I concede – to establish a local precedent for a "stricter liability" OSA offence.

Put simply, I now tell our journalists that if the Singapore equivalent of the Pentagon papers were to fall off the back of a lorry, we the media cannot publish them because we would have no defence if taken to court. It's similar to having sex with a minor and being inescapably guilty of statutory rape.

This move was also present as we are now in the Wikileaks era. Mr Lee could see then that governments and diplomacy can't function if everything can be leaked with impunity.

I can think of no better example of how his unique practical intelligence shaped particular aspects of public policy.

Another example is the Newspaper and Printing Presses Act, a piece of legislation so canny that only Mr Lee could have devised it. By limiting ownership of a newspaper company by any one person or entity to no more than 3 per cent – it was later raised to 5 per cent – he made sure there would be no Rupert Murdochs in Singapore.

Talking of the noisy minority, I'm most proud too that Singapore's silent majority has come out in force this past week to show they have imbued what Mr Lee stood for, and are hugely appreciative of what he's done for them and for this fortunate country, tiny though we are.

So rest in peace, Mr Lee. Singapore may yet attain the new golden era you probably saw in 2007 when you were 84. You told young Singaporeans: "You're a generation that is especially blessed... If there are no wars or oil crises, this golden period can stretch out over many years."

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## THE SINGAPORE HE BUILT

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015

**1963**  
Mr Lee speaking at an election rally in Fullerton Square. Sitting behind him is then National Development Minister Lim Kim San (centre). The PAP won a resounding victory in independent Singapore's first elections held on Sept 21, 1963.



**1976**  
Mr Lee tackled the topic of leadership succession during this election rally in Fullerton Square, saying the real issue facing Singapore was: What happens when the present leadership is gone?



**2001**  
Mr Lee, who had by this time become Senior Minister, speaking at an election rally at Block 503, Tampines Central, to lend his support to the PAP team contesting in Tampines GRC.



**2006**  
Mr Lee celebrating after he and his team retained Tanjong Pagar GRC on Nomination Day following a walkover. With him are his fellow MPs (from left, in white) Baey Yam Keng, Indraneel Rajah and Sam Tan.



**A LIFE IN SERVICE**  
A young Mr Lee (above) at Assembly House, which is now known as Old Parliament House, in December 1958, and nearly 40 years later, in his office (right) in the Istana Annex in 1995, when he had become Senior Minister.

# 'I did my best'

The following is an extract from the book *Lee Kuan Yew: The Man And His Ideas*, published in 1998, in which Mr Lee reveals details about his personal life in his own words

Han Fook Kwang, Warren Fernandez and Sumiko Tan

Four thirty on a Saturday afternoon and the Istana is quiet, save for the steady, sleepy sound of cicadas snuggled deep in the trees on the sloping lawns.

The Istana, Malay for "palace", stands on what was once part of a massive nutmeg estate belonging to a British merchant named Charles Robert Prinsep.

In 1867, Governor Harry Ord, who was in charge of Singapore from 1867 to 1873, acquired the land and built Government House on it.

The stately white building, a mix of Ionic, Doric and Corinthian orders, was constructed by Indian convicts from Bencoolen in Sumatra.

Over the years, other structures were added to the grounds.

One of them, Sri Temasek, is the official residence of the prime minister of Singapore, though no prime minister has ever lived in it.

There is also the Istana Annexe, Istana Villa and Istana Lodge.

The main Istana building houses the president's office, while the Istana Annexe serves as the prime minister's office.

On the second floor of the Annexe, all is busy on this humid afternoon.

Plainclothes security officers tread the narrow carpeted corridors, buzzing each other periodically over their walkie-talkies.

In a brightly lit room, a secretary works at her computer, one ear peeped to an intercom linking her to an adjoining office where Lee Kuan Yew works.

It is an L-shaped room with an attached bathroom. It is free of personal paraphernalia. No family photographs decorate his table, no personal mementoes line his walls.

He sits behind a desk, his back to a computer. A low cabinet next to it is stacked with books and files.

A wood-pannelled wall camouflages the door to the room where his two secretaries work.

A teak table for eight stands 4m from his desk, a jade dragon jar in the middle.

Lee works in this office six days a week, from about 10 in the morning to 6.30 in the evening, when he puts his work aside for his daily exercise in the Istana grounds.

He has been known to come back to the office on Sundays and public holidays.

He is about 1.8m tall, and slim. His trousers, which are usually in light hues, are loose, and he tugs at the waistband frequently.

He is at least 10kg lighter than when he was in his 40s.

His shirts are well-pressed though well-worn, and he wears a windbreaker, usually beige, when he is in the office.

At 74, his hair is white.

The once wiry black mop has thinned considerably over the years, accentuating a broad, high forehead under which small, piercing eyes stare.

His face is pink in tone, the skin mostly unlined, though tiny creases criss-cross the skin on his eyelids. His nails are neatly trimmed.

Even in a private setting, he is a forceful personality. His facial expression changes quickly and his hands often chop the air to emphasise a point. His voice rises and falls according to his emotions.

He is quick to show impatience, and slow to smile. He has never suffered fools lightly.

Who is this man who, more than anyone else, has shaped the



history of modern Singapore? Who is the person behind the personality Singaporeans regard with awe, respect, love, fear or hate?

How does he describe himself? How does he see his 40 years of political life? What is his role now? What is his family life like? And what are his dreams and fears?

Lee revealed his personal life in these interviews with the authors, weaving in events that took place 40 years ago as if they had happened only yesterday.

**I have to be taken seriously**

Asked to describe himself, Lee is careful and takes his time to answer the question.

"I would say that I'm very determined when I set out to do something.

"First, I've got to decide whether

something is worth doing. If it's not worth doing, well, I'm not prepared to spend the time over it, to make the effort. Then I just coast along, it doesn't matter whether it succeeds or doesn't succeed, it's of no consequence.

He has always relished a fight with his critics. He puts it this way: "I have never been overconcerned or obsessed with opinion polls or popularity polls. I think a leader who is a weak leader.

"If you are concerned with whether your rating will go up or down, then you are not a leader. You are just catching the wind..."

"You will go where the wind is blowing. And that's not what I am in this for."

"Between being loved and being feared, I have always believed Machiavelli was right. If nobody is afraid of me, I'm meaningless. When I say something, to make it easier for me to govern, I have to be taken very seriously."

What others think of him – many commentators have had a field day writing about him, and coffee-shop gossip about his life constantly hovers in the air – is water off a duck's back.

He has always relished a fight with his critics. He puts it this way: "I have never been overconcerned or obsessed with opinion polls or popularity polls. I think a leader who is a weak leader.

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"Between being loved and being feared, I have always believed Machiavelli was right. If nobody is afraid of me, I'm meaningless. When I say something, to make it easier for me to govern, I have to be taken very seriously."

"So when I say 'please don't do that', you do it, I have to punish you because I was not joking when I said that. And when I punish, it's to punish publicly.

"And people will know the next time, if you want to do that when he said 'no, don't do it', you must be prepared for a brutal encounter.

"What the crowd thinks of me from time to time, I consider totally irrelevant... The whole ground can be against, but if I know this is right, I set out to do it, and I am quite sure, given time, as events unfold, I will win over the ground..."

"My job as a leader is to make sure that before the next elections, enough has developed and disclosed itself to the people to make it possible for me to swing them around. That's the business of a leader – not to follow the crowd. That's a washout. The country will go down the drain!"

"I prepared myself for the possibility of failure, for the possibility of being able to live with failure. In other words, if you want a soft life, better not get into this.

"So I led a pretty disciplined life; if the worst came to the worst, I could survive. I don't need caviar for breakfast, or for dinner, or for supper. I can live on soya beans. I can live quite frugally if I need to.

"It became a way of remoulding my life in a direction or in a way which would withstand a sharp attack on it.

"Even today, I would still drive my car in the Istana grounds. If tomorrow I have no driver, I can just pick up my car and drive. Occasionally, on a Sunday, I drive myself outside the Istana.

"I carry my own bag as a matter of principle, because otherwise, for 30, 40 years, with everybody pushing chairs for you, your limbs will atrophy.

"And I was very keen that that shouldn't happen to my children, that nobody pushed chairs for them. If a ball fell down and the Istana boy wanted to pick it up, I would stop him and say, 'No, that's his ball. Ignore him. He will go to the drain and pick it up.' They had to learn that, and I think they have benefited from it."

Politics also meant he had to give up a potentially well-paying career as a lawyer, which one of his brothers went into.

"When I decided to go into politics, Bashir Mallal, the man who ran the Malay Law Journal, came to see me. He wasn't a lawyer, but he was a lawyer's clerk and he knew a lot about law. Had there been night courses, he would have been a very good lawyer. His son and I were schoolmates, so he knew me as a teenager. He liked me.

"I was doing well then as a lawyer in Laycock and Ong – \$4, 55 – but I was getting involved in politics, all those unions and clan associations.

"He said to me, 'Make your name at the law first and make your fortune, then go into politics', which was what people of his generation did. That was conventional wisdom. You make a name at the law, you make your fortune, then you go into Congress politics, as in India.

"He didn't understand that something dramatic had happened to my generation, that making a fortune, playing safe, doesn't add up when the system is wrong.

"I was dead set against the system. But going into politics meant a hazardous, peril-fraught career.

"It's not a career, it's a vocation. You're taking a plunge, no return. And if you fail, you pay for it with your life. The communists, if they fix you, they fix you good and proper."

But, he admits, he had the luxury of allowing his convictions to rule his decision as his wife, Kwa Geok Choo, was herself a successful lawyer.

"A great advantage was I have a wife who could be sole breadwinner and bring the children up. That was my insurance policy.

"Without such a wife, I would have been hard-pressed. To be fair, I was able to make these decisions because I had this fall-back position, I was insured."

**I would do a lot for a friend, but ...**

As prime minister, he has had to take tough action against friends.

When President Devan Nair, a long-time ally, was found misbehaving because of alcoholism in 1985, for example, he had to be removed from office.

Then, in 1986, he led the law

**I have never been overconcerned or obsessed with opinion polls or popularity polls. I think a leader who is, is a weak leader. If you are concerned with whether your rating will go up or down, then you are not a leader. You are just catching the wind... You will go where the wind is blowing. And that's not what I am in this for.**

MR LEE KUAN YEW, on public opinion

## The makings of a leader

Lee has strong views about what makes a good and effective leader, what qualities are important and will make a difference to the way a country is run.

"You need, besides determination, all the other attributes that will push a project along. You must have application, you must be prepared to work hard, you must be prepared to get people to work with you.

"Especially for political leaders, you've got to have people work for you and work with you. You've got to enthrone them with the same fire and the same eagerness that pushes you along.

"I think that's a very big factor in leadership: At the end of the day, you must also have idealism to succeed, to make people come with you. You must have that vision of what is at the bottom of the rainbow you want to reach.

"But you must have a sense of reality... to feel when this vision is not practical, that it will ruin us.

"But a leader without the vision, the idea to strive to improve things, is no good. Then you'll just stay put, you won't progress."

He also saw the importance of reading and exchanging views with experts.

"You must read. It's one way of getting information. But you've got to read what's relevant, not only what you're interested in.

"My wife reads Jane Austen. She was a student of English language and literature so she likes to read books in which she had found joy as a student.

"I wouldn't read Jane Austen, not because I don't admire her style, but because I would not have the time.

"I suppose there are times when I get so tired and browned off with certain problems, I want to take my mind off them, so I'll read something totally different, about South American tribes or whatever.

"Occasionally, I would read little biographies or autobiographies. There's one about an English lady in Kashgar. My wife would have read it, she'd say, 'Oh, this is interesting!' It's a totally different world. It transports me for one, two hours to a different world.

"Unless the book is riveting, I don't read it from cover to cover. I'll read it and if I see something else, I'll pick it up.

"You must not overlook the importance of discussions with knowledgeable people. I would say that is much more productive than absorbing or running through masses of documents.

"Because in a short exchange, you can abstract from somebody who has immense knowledge and experience the essence of what he had gained.

"In a one-hour exchange over dinner with some people who are knowledgeable in certain fields, you get the hang of a particular problem."

**I can live frugally**

When he decided to enter politics in 1955, Lee knew that he had to prepare himself for a life of uncertainty. He set about this in a characteristically practical manner.

"When I went in, I had to be comfortable with my own self, that I can live with failure. And failure means it has failed, the communists have won and I'm in deep trouble.

"Either I have to flee, or they will brainwash me, break me. I don't think they will just kill me because by that time, I would have become a prominent fellow. They want to use me like they used Henry Pu Yi, the last emperor. They brainwash you and break you. And I knew all that!

Continued on >>Page 22

THE SINGAPORE HE BUILT

Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015



From >>Page 21

take its course when National Development Minister Teh Cheang Wan was discovered to be accepting bribes.

"Let me put it in a simple way. I would do a lot personally for a friend, provided what we set out together to do is not sacrificed. We set out to get this place up.

"If I sacrifice that now, we are doing harm to what we've been trying to do that cannot be done.

"But if you need a hundred thousand dollars, I'll sign it out of my own resources or raise the money. Good luck to you.

"And that's a different matter, that's a personal relationship. But that personal relationship cannot be transmuted into a concession that will jeopardise state interests.

"That cannot be done because that's what we're trying to establish - a system where people act in accordance with certain principles.

"The purpose is not just to be righteous. The purpose is to create a system which will carry on because it has not been compromised. I didn't do that just to be righteous about Teh Cheang Wan. But if I had compromised, that is the end of the system."

Stepping aside

On Nov 28, 1990, Lee handed over the reins of government to Goh Chok Tong. The event was televised, and many observed that he looked emotional.

Since then, there has also been talk about whether he has really relinquished power and whether his influence behind the scenes has diminished.

To him, all this misses the mark completely. Those who indulge in such idle speculation, he said, do not understand what his stepping aside as prime minister meant to him and the country.

"I had prepared for it for a long time, so I was impatient for it to take place... The Western press, they write up these things projecting their reactions into me, that to give up power was a disastrous loss of authority and so on. Whereas my approach was totally different.

"I had a job to do. I had come to the conclusion by about '76 that my most important job was to get a team that could carry on the work, otherwise we would fail.

"So I spent a long time hunting for good men, working out a system that will produce a team of good men, comparable at least as competent as what I had in place.

"They may not be as tough and tough-minded, or as imaginative or creative because that's in the luck of the draw. But they must be able to run the place. They must first know the problems. So we set out headhunting.

"I set the target at 1988, when I would be 65, believing that the sooner I give up, the younger I will be and the more active I can be to make sure that the team succeeds. I'll be around to make sure that the team can succeed. The later I give up, the older and slower I will be, the more risky its success.

"When '88 came, Chok Tong wasn't confident of taking over from me and dealing with our immediate neighbours, Suharto and Mahathir. He felt he would be at a disadvantage.

"So he said, 'Better give me two years; meanwhile I can get a feel of the job.' Meanwhile, I had been passing over more and more of the work to him. And I said, 'What do you think? What's your view?', pushing him to make decisions and then supporting him. Or if I disagreed, I would explain the reasons.

"So when 1990 came, he wanted me to stay on for the 25th anniversary of Singapore's independence, for a sentimental reason, 1965 to 1990. So I finished my term in August and he was ready to take over by November, after I'd tidied up some odds and ends.

"My job after that was to make sure that an error which is avoidable because of my experience should not be committed if it can help it. I think the team in place is functioning. And I believe, without me, it can function as well. That is a triumph!

"The Western correspondents don't understand that this is a completely different approach to the problem of succession. For him and his team to fail, it's my failure.

"I brought this team together. If they succeed, it is I who brought about the success. It's a very serious business, of ensuring the continuation of good government."

It was for this reason, he says, that he went public in 1988 to give an assessment of whom he thought could best take over from him. He had rated Tony Tan his first choice, even though Goh Chok Tong was then First Deputy Prime Minister.

"When I went public to say, 'Look, this is my assessment', I did that deliberately to make sure people understood that this was an open exercise, that they, Goh's peers, had chosen him.

"In other words, having chosen him, they have to support him. I had not appointed him. If I ap-

pointed him and they disagreed, they could withhold support and he would not succeed...

"Having seen what went wrong, particularly in the communist countries, and even in Britain, where Churchill handed over to Anthony Eden, Eden failed and Macmillan picked it up.

"I did not believe that if I appointed the leader, they would give him the same wholehearted support. So I forced them to decide amongst themselves. I had said to them, 'Look, my assessment is as follows.'

"This was after the 1984 elections. I watched them run the elections and I watched their press conferences. I said the most decisive leader was Tony Tan. He would say 'yes or no' and he would stick to it.

"Goh Chok Tong would try to please you. You can see him in a press conference, even today. If he sits back and talks to his Cabinet, then he comes out with a firm position, after long discussion. But if you engage him in a press conference, you might get him to make some concessions.

"You will never get Tony Tan to do that. You won't get me to do that. You can talk to me till the cows come home; if I have decided that this is no go, it is no go.

"You may be unhappy, but I am quite convinced, after six months, maybe after six years, you will know that I was right.

"But he (Goh) has one advantage - he has their support. They've got to support him because they elected him. And I think that that was a wise move. I made it public to let people know that the choice was that of his colleagues.

"There was a reason and method behind what people thought was a casual passing of judgment. I was seriously placing the weight on the shoulders of his colleagues. They should work with me, I have pointed out this is right, that is wrong.

"I thought at that time that Deng Xiaoping made a mistake getting rid of Zhao Ziyang. Maybe he had compelling reasons. I don't know... must have been powerful reasons. After working with a man for 30, 40 years, why knock him down like that?"

Does he miss being the prime minister?

"Frankly no. Supposing I'm prime minister, I have to attend to all the day-to-day problems. I've got to go to all these conferences, Asean summit, Apec, visit so many countries.

"I have done all that for so long. What's the point of it? I have outgrown it. I don't hanker to go to an Asean summit or an Apec summit, or to have a state visit to America or Britain.

"I have been through all that. I have been the guest of honour at formal dinners, state visits - from President Johnson to Nixon, to Ford to Reagan and Bush. Well, that's enough!

"The prime minister has to work with Clinton. It's not my job. He's a younger man. Supposing I were the prime minister and I had to deal with Clinton, I would find it quite an effort dealing with a Vietnam War generation, a man who was against the Vietnam War.

"I was for the Vietnam War and had encouraged the President of the United States, both Johnson and then Nixon."

On his role as senior minister and his life now, Lee sees himself as a guardian to the younger team running Singapore.

At 70-plus, what do I need? Time to reflect. I need enough to keep me engaged and interested in life.

"What is it I want to do? What can I best do with the balance of my time? I don't know how much time I've got left. If, let's say, I have another five or 10 years - if I am lucky, and am like my father more than like my mother, who died when she was 74. But it's 10 years in which my energy levels will be declining, year by year.

"What I'd like to do now is to give this Government the benefit of my experience in avoiding mistakes.

"I can't tell them what to do as their great achievements, their great breakthroughs. That's for them to work out with younger Singaporeans. But I know that certain things are sure paths to trouble, so avoid them.

"It's not by accident that we got here. Every possible thing that could have gone wrong, we had tried to pre-empt. That's how we got here, that's why we have substantial reserves.

"Because if we don't have reserves, the moment we run into trouble, who will lend you money when we've got no gold mines or oil fields? We've got nothing.

"All we have is this functioning organism which requires brains, specialised skills put together in a very intricate form, with inputs from many nations and their experts in financial services, manufacturing, tourism, all sorts of economic activities put together. It's not easy to replicate.

"I consider this as the best contribution I can make, the most worthwhile thing to do."



MEETING THE PEOPLE  
Mr Lee greeting the crowd at the University Cultural Centre of the National Day Rally speech delivered by then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong on Aug 19, 2001.



TAKING A BACK SEAT  
Then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, Deputy Prime Ministers Lee Hsien Loong and Tony Tan Keng Yam, and ministers of state lining up to take photographs as Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew watches from a corner.

All I can say is, I did my best. This was the job I undertook, I did my best and I could not have done more in the circumstances. What people think of it, I have to leave to them. It is of no great consequence. What is of consequence is, I did my best.

MR LEE KUAN YEW, on whether he would live differently if he were to do it over

I've been a lucky man - they derive great strength and comfort from their religion. "They do not believe that this is the end of the world. Their behavior and their hopes do not end with this life. That gives them enormous reserves of stamina and serenity of mind. "I would not dismiss religion as so much superstition. The communists have failed in stamping out religion because it is part of human nature. "I don't think I have ever, in times of great danger or peril, gone down on my knees to pray, or gone to the temple and hoped for some miracle. "I do not believe strength comes, necessarily, from a belief in God. You must have some belief in a philosophy, in an idea, in a concept. "It is a question of faith which, in the case of the communists, had



AT THE PARADE  
Then Senior Minister Lee watching the 2001 National Day Parade from the VIP lounge in the National Stadium.

Lee Kuan Yew: The Man And His Ideas was the first book that tried to capture the essence of Mr Lee and his ideas that shaped Singapore.

An e-book extracting parts of the book is now out on The Straits Times Star E-books app. It is FREE FOR DOWNLOAD

To get the e-book:  
 - Go to Apple App Store on your iPad or Google Play Store on your Android tablet or smartphone  
 - Type "The Straits Times Star" to search for The Straits Times Star E-books app  
 - Download it onto your iPad or Android device  
 - You will find Lee Kuan Yew: The Man And His Ideas inside

The app is designed to work on iPad devices running iOS 6 and above. It is not available on the iPhone. It is best viewed on tablets. Because of its size, you might want to download it using a wifi connection.



WHEN IN ROME...  
Mr Lee watching his wife, Madam Kwa Geok Choo, tossing a coin into the Trevi Fountain in Rome, Italy, in April 1968.

there now. There was a deep ravine on the side with iron waterpipes. And on a very rainy day - this was in '51 - I was going to play golf at the Island Club. "The car just skidded and then rolled over two times, but landed on soft grass and soft earth! "A golf pro once demonstrated a trick shot. He took an egg, put it on a tee and he took a sand wedge. And he said, 'I'll hit that tee, snap it and the egg will drop on the grass unbroken.' And he did it. "He snapped a tall wooden tee and the egg dropped down unbroken. "I wanted to see how actually it was done. I thought he turned the blade, so the blade snapped the tee, and did not touch the egg. "So I said, 'Do that again.' He said, 'No, I may not be as lucky the second time.' "I think I will give you that answer. I may not be as lucky a second time in so many things... All I can say is, I did my best. "This was the job I undertook. I did my best and I could not have done more in the circumstances. "What people think of it, I have to leave to them. It is of no great consequence. "What is of consequence is, I did my best."

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Mr Lee Kuan Yew  
1923 - 2015



# He changed my life

"I paid attention to how he was reacting. I went to one side. He seemed okay with it. Then I went to the other side. Still okay. Then I began circling him. When he went to the toilet, one of the editors who were interviewing him said I was moving too much and making too much noise. I told him, 'But he doesn't seem to mind.' He said, 'Yeah, why is that?'"

MR GEORGE GASCON



Mr Lee's wife, Madam Kwa Geok Choo, watched as a makeup artist prepared him for his public appearance at the 2001 National Day Rally at University Cultural Centre in National University of Singapore. Known for her attention to detail, she once interrupted the taping of an interview to touch up his hair and makeup. PHOTO: GEORGE GASCON

## The trusted photographer

George Gascon, former ST photographer, was given unique access after gaining Mr Lee's confidence

**Raul Dancel**  
Philippines Correspondent  
In Manila

He did not crowd a room, bark instructions or prance around.

And because he knew how to observe without intruding, Mr George Gascon earned the privilege of gaining access to a man known for being exacting in all his affairs, Mr Lee Kuan Yew.

For seven years, as a photographer with The Straits Times, Mr Gascon recorded Mr Lee for posterity.

He witnessed unguarded moments of tenderness: Mrs Lee lovingly combing Mr Lee's hair before a photo shoot. He was there when Mr Lee hosted important world figures, lingering on when all the other photographers had been ushered out, prompting quizzical looks. Who was this man with the camera and the Charles Bronson moustache?

Mr Gascon joined The Straits Times in 1992. Three years later, he was asked to take pictures when Mr Lee was being interviewed for the book *Lee Kuan Yew: The Man And His Ideas*.

His brief was to go in, take a few shots and then head for the door. Mr Lee was not known to be an easy subject; the first photographer assigned to the job had managed to get just 17 shots before being told the session was over.

To his surprise, Mr Gascon ended up staying for two hours as Mr Lee spoke.

In an interview with The Sunday Times last Thursday at his farm, south of Manila, where he has lived since retirement, the 62-year-old paused to reflect on what made Mr Lee trust him.

"I paid attention to how he was reacting.

"I went to one side. He seemed okay with it.

"Then I went to the other side. Still okay.

"Then I began circling him.

"When he went to the toilet, one of the editors who were interviewing him said I was moving too much and making too much noise.

"I told him, 'But he doesn't seem to mind.'

"He said, 'Yeah, why is that?'" said Mr Gascon.

At the end of the shoot, Mr Gascon had used up 12 rolls of film of 36 shots each.

His boss told him: "You just earned your bonus."

He had been told to lug a tripod, a strobe light and a flashgun, but Mr Gascon said he instinctively knew that bursts of light and a noisy shutter would get him sent out faster than he could say "Cheese".

All he took was a camera. The only lighting was sunlight.

To keep his nerves steady, he thought of Mr Lee not as one of Singapore's most powerful men, but as a father or a grandfather.

Mr Gascon said that when he was next invited to the Istana, Mrs Lee walked up to him. "So you're the photographer? Thank you very



After stepping down as Prime Minister, Mr Lee continued to work at the Istana, where he took meetings in his office (above), among other rooms. PHOTO: GEORGE GASCON



Mr Lee with Mr Gascon and his wife, Sylvia. For about 20 minutes, he tried to persuade them to stay on in Singapore instead of retiring in the Philippines. PHOTO: COURTESY OF GEORGE GASCON



Mr Gascon feeding chickens at his farm in Cavite province's Mendez town, a three-hour ride from Manila. He spends most of his days there now. ST PHOTO: RAUL DANCEL

much, George, for the wonderful pictures of my husband."

From that point on, Mr Gascon became "George".

At official functions, Mr Lee would acknowledge Mr Gascon with a slight nod. He would be invited not just to the Istana but to Mr Lee's home in Oxley Road and to occasions as intimate as a family birthday party.

Mr Lee's office would often consult the photographer - what shirt

colour would work best for a shoot, what was the ideal spot in the Istana for group portraits of some of the world's most important men?

During photo sprays, he would be allowed to linger and he could move outside the security rope and shoot from any angle he wanted.

When Ms Megawati Sukarnoputri, former Indonesian president, paid Mr Lee a courtesy call in 2000, she noticed that everyone had been led out of the room except for one man.

"Who is he?" she asked her host.

Mr Lee told her: "This is George Gascon. He's my photographer. He's from the Philippines."

Mr Gascon said: "I felt my pride swelling, for someone so important to introduce me to someone equally important."

He said the freedom Mr Lee gave him allowed him to capture some little-seen facets of the leader. For a meaningful photograph can capture more than facial features, it shows a man's thoughts, he said.

Mr Gascon particularly remembered one shot where Mr Lee clasped his cheeks with his palms. "You can feel his exasperation in that photo, at having to belabour a point, at trying to overcome stubbornness with patience," he said.

It was also the unguarded moments that he cherished. In a photo shoot for the first of Mr Lee's two-volume memoirs, Mr Gascon was invited to Mr Lee's house.

He was asked to take a photo of Mr Lee in front of a computer, so that Singapore's seniors could see that they had nothing to fear from technology.

As they were preparing for the shoot, Mr Gascon caught a glimpse of Mrs Lee combing Mr Lee's hair.

It was a moment that Mr Gascon dearly wished to capture. So he took out his Leica, knowing the quiet shutter would not intrude into the tenderness.

Yet, even with her back to Mr Gascon, Mrs Lee heard the clicking of the camera.

She said: "George, I heard that."

When Mr Lee learnt that Mr Gascon was planning to leave Singapore and retire in the Philippines, he asked to see the photographer.

For about 20 minutes, Mr Lee met Mr Gascon and his wife, trying to persuade them to stay on.

"But I had already made up my mind," said Mr Gascon.

As parting advice, Mr Lee told Mr Gascon to take good care of his hard-earned money. The advice has served Mr Gascon well. He placed about \$100,000 of his Central Provident Fund savings in an investment fund with DBS Bank. When that fund matured, he transferred the money to a Philippine account, where it serves as a buffer against emergencies.

Mr Gascon now spends most of his days at his 500,000 sq m farm, in Cavite province's Mendez town, a three-hour ride from Manila. He gets most of what he needs from the farm, spending no more than \$500 a month.

"I'm at peace here," he said.

He was tending to his garden when he heard the news of Mr Lee's death. Gathering the most fragrant herbs and most colourful flowers from his farm, he arranged them around a portrait of Mr Lee, the one that eventually became a book cover.

He lit a candle and said a prayer for the man to whom he would always be "my photographer".

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