

Tribute to Mr Lee Kuan Yew

Mr Lee Kuan Yew, founding Prime Minister of Singapore passed away on 23 March 2015.

Mr Lee's contributions to Singapore are immense – his foresight and visionary leadership has created a thriving, dynamic and competitive economy that has put Singapore on the world map. As Singapore's first Prime Minister, Mr Lee had a strong hand in enacting the Industrial Relations Act in 1960, Employment Act in 1968 and more importantly, the forging of tripartism post-independence. These laid the foundation for the industrial peace that employers and workers have enjoyed in Singapore over the last 50 years, which has in turn created good jobs and careers for Singaporeans.

“Mr Lee Kuan Yew dedicated his life to creating a favourable business environment to attract sustained investments which enabled businesses to prosper and workers to have good jobs and a higher standard of living. He opened doors through his connections and the Singapore Inc branding for local enterprises to venture abroad into China, India and many other emerging economies. Twenty years ago, I was in one such business mission that accompanied Mr Lee to Ningbo, China. He spoke of the need then for Singapore enterprises to make inroads into China. YCH took his advice and our expansion into China since 1995 has paid off. This internationalisation of Singapore enterprises is also the legacy of Mr Lee Kuan Yew.”

Dr Robert Yap, President of the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF)

“Mr Lee Kuan Yew's commitment and resolve in engaging the labour movement and employers as tripartite partners brought about lasting industrial peace in Singapore. This has turned out to be a key national strength for sustainable economic and social progress. Even after he stepped

down as Prime Minister, Mr Lee continued to keep watch over the state of labour management relations in Singapore. Having worked with him personally, I know that the well-being of employers and the welfare of employees were always at the heart of his concerns.”

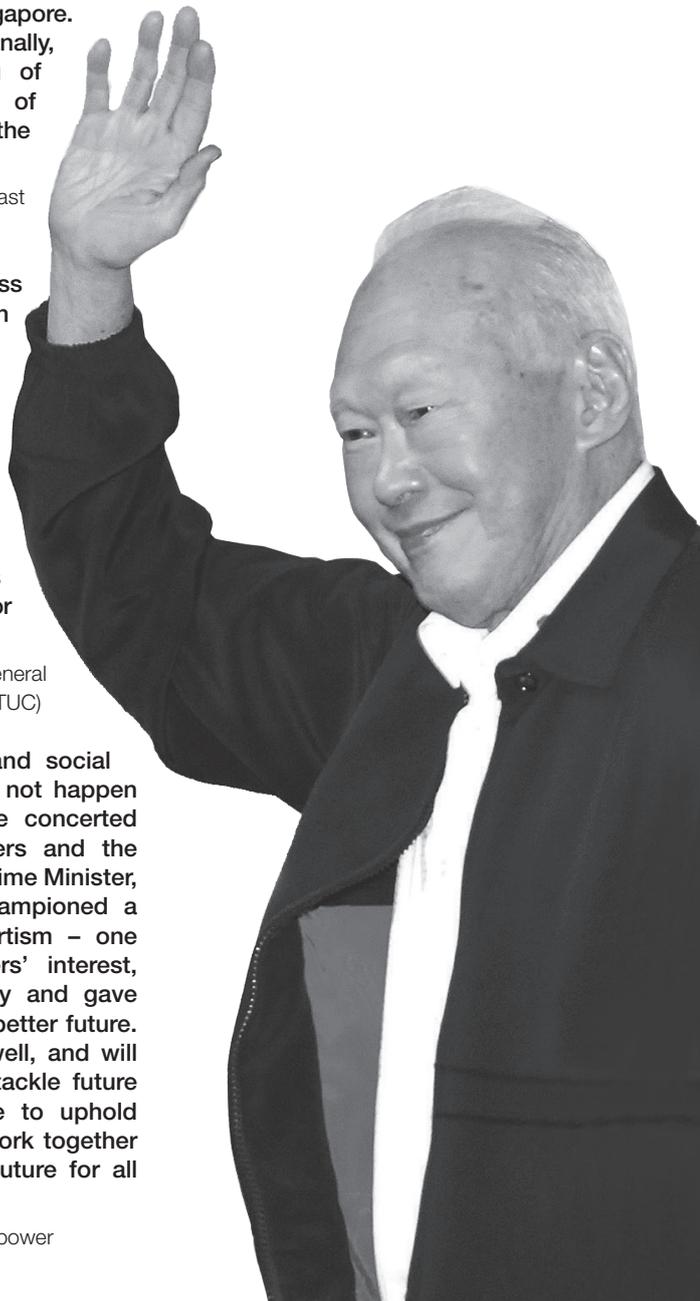
Mr Stephen Lee, Immediate Past President of SNEF

“Mr Lee was pro-business because without foreign investments, economic growth and jobs, we would all be poor together. However, Mr Lee was even more pro-worker. To him, economic growth was important but that was just the means, not the end objective in itself. The end objective for Mr Lee was to change the lives of our workers and people for the better.”

Mr Lim Swee Say, Secretary-General National Trades Union Congress (NTUC)

“Singapore's economic and social progress over the years did not happen by chance, but through the concerted efforts of workers, employers and the Government. Our founding Prime Minister, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, had championed a constructive model of tripartism – one which took care of workers' interest, built a competitive economy and gave all Singaporeans hope for a better future. This model has served us well, and will stand us in good stead to tackle future challenges. Let us continue to uphold the spirit of tripartism and work together as one to build a brighter future for all Singaporeans.”

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Minister for Manpower



MOM and NTUC Leadership Changes

In a press statement from the Prime Minister's Office dated 8 April 2015, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced some changes in his Cabinet line-up.

National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) Secretary-General Lim Swee Say who tendered his resignation to NTUC on 30 March 2015 will be appointed Minister for Manpower with effect from 4 May 2015. NTUC Deputy Secretary-General Chan Chun Sing will take over as Secretary-General with effect from 4 May 2015. He was also appointed as Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, and relinquished his appointments as Minister for Social and Family Development and Second Minister for Defence on 9 April 2015.

Minister for Manpower Tan Chuan-Jin said: "We at MOM (Ministry of Manpower) are looking forward to welcome Lim Swee Say on board and know that this journey to make things better for our people will continue in earnest. I am also thankful for Swee Say's tremendous service for our workers all these years at NTUC." Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) President Dr Robert Yap added: "Mr Lim rallied the Labour Movement and employers around many important causes. These include the 1997 Skills Redevelopment Programme to help companies retrain workers during restructuring, the upturn the downturn strategy during the 2007-2008 financial crisis to help companies cut costs and save jobs, the Inclusive Growth Programme to support companies which share their productivity gains with workers and the Progressive Wage Models to help companies link wages to productivity, skills and careers."

Minister Tan was appointed Minister for Social and Family Development on 9 April 2015. He will hold both portfolios until he relinquishes his appointment as Minister for Manpower on 4 May 2015.

NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say commented: "Chuan-Jin has done much to re-tune our manpower policy to reposition our economy and re-skilling our workers. I will build on the solid foundation laid by him to help our people of all ages to pursue fulfilling careers." Dr Robert Yap, President, SNEF said: "We are sad to see Mr Tan Chuan-Jin leave the Manpower Ministry. SNEF worked very closely and well with him to review both the Employment Act and the Industrial Relations Act to better protect workers while balancing the needs of employers for labour market flexibility."

Budget 2015 for Employers and Workers

Several key initiatives positively impacting employers and workers were announced by Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) and Minister for Finance Tharman Shanmugaratnam in his Budget speech in Parliament on 23 February 2015.

To promote voluntary re-employment of older workers, the Government introduced an additional Special Employment Credit of up to 3% of wages for workers aged 65 and above, for the year 2015. This is on top of the 8.5% wage offset that employers will receive in 2015 for workers above age 50. The law already requires employers to re-employ eligible workers up to age 65. This measure will encourage employers to continue employing them beyond that age.

DPM Tharman, Chairman SkillsFuture Council, also announced a slew of SkillsFuture initiatives during Budget 2015.

SkillsFuture initiatives for workers to acquire new skills and deepen skill sets throughout life

From second half of 2015, Singaporeans aged 40 and above will enjoy higher subsidies of at least 90% of programme cost for MOE-funded courses and 90% of course fees for WDA-supported courses. Training will also be made more accessible with more skills-focused modular courses being introduced this year. In addition, early to mid-career Singaporeans who want to develop and deepen relevant skills in priority sectors can tap on the SkillsFuture Study Awards.

Starting from 2016, Singaporeans aged 25 and above can make use of the SkillsFuture Credit to pay for self-initiated work-skills related courses supported by WDA, MOE and other public agencies.

SkillsFuture initiatives for employers to build and retain a skilled workforce

Support will be given under the SkillsFuture Leadership Development Initiative to companies in preparing Singaporeans to take on leadership and managerial roles. To strengthen companies' training capabilities, small and medium enterprises (SMEs) will have access to a pool of SkillsFuture Mentors with relevant industry experience.

In addition, the Sectoral Manpower Plans, to be implemented progressively in all key sectors by 2020, will strengthen collaboration between employers, unions, education and training providers, trade associations and the Government to project future skills needs and set out a systematic plan to develop those skills in the local workforce.

A better future for all Singaporeans

With SkillsFuture, we will create a new environment for lifelong learning, to help every Singaporean develop skills relevant to the future and achieve skills mastery. **More details of the SkillsFuture initiatives can be found at the SkillsFuture website: <http://www.skillsfuture.sg/>.**

Being Inclusive Is Everyone's Job



role in creating fair and progressive workplaces. He explained that leaders set the tone and direction of what the company wants to do, and practitioners put it into processes and action. He further added that

The Conference on Fair and Progressive Employment Practices, held from 9-10 April 2015, highlighted employee involvement, peer influence and leadership as critical factors in advancing fair and progressive employment practices. With the theme, "Inclusiveness: Advancing Workplaces in Singapore", the Conference organised by the Tripartite Alliance for Fair and Progressive Employment Practices (TAFEP), saw more than 500 participants engaged in meaningful dialogue on topics such as the effective management of older workers, the skills needed to successfully implement inclusion programmes, and creating work-life harmony.

Delivering the opening address, Guest-of-Honour Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin stressed the importance of the leadership

everyone should have a shared responsibility in building a workplace that's fair and progressive.

Minister Tan presented award plaques to the winners of the TAFEP-Zaobao Workplace Heroes Contest, and unveiled "Work Happy", a publication featuring 50 organisations that enabled work-life harmony for their employees. The contest gathered public nominations of inspiring individuals employed across diverse industries and in various capacities, who made a difference at the workplace.

To find out more about the best practices of 50 organisations in Singapore that have made a real difference to the lives of their employees, visit <https://www.tafep.sg/work-happy-happy-work-happy-life-50-employers-who-make-it-look-easy-to-download-a-copy-of-the-Work-Happy-publication>.