

**TRANSCRIPT OF SPEECH BY**  
**PAP SECRETARY-GENERAL LEE HSIEN LOONG AT**  
**PAP AWARDS AND CONVENTION 2023, 5 NOVEMBER 2023**

Party Chairman, Comrades,

Brothers and Sisters from the Labour Movement,

1. Good morning to everybody!

**LKY100 – Year of Reflection**

2. This year we have been holding many events island wide to commemorate LKY100. Besides honouring Mr Lee, LKY100 has also been an occasion to reflect on our journey of nation building. In our early, formative years, in the 50s and 60s, many former colonies were gaining their independence, just like Singapore. Starting out on their nation-building journey. But not many new countries saw the same success that we did.

3. It is not by chance that Singapore now stands tall in the world. Our success owes everything to the solid foundations that Mr Lee and his team built. They established a strong set of core values for this party and the nation. We are all familiar with them: Multiracialism, meritocracy, incorruptibility, justice, and equality. Our founding fathers also created strong institutions that continue to shape today's Singapore. Public housing, national service, strong healthcare and

education systems. The hard work of the first generation of leaders brought us here, and put us in a sound position for the future.

4. But the world has changed many times since 1965. Today, our circumstances are very different. Externally, there are tensions and uncertainties everywhere. Domestically, having made great progress, we now face new challenges to our society and our economy.

5. We need resolve and ingenuity to continue progressing amidst these shifting tides. Even as we devise new strategies to move ahead, some things remain constant. The ideals of nation building that Mr Lee and his team championed and fought so hard for, they remain fundamental to us. We need to apply them in a new era, to build upon our forefathers' achievements, and take Singapore forward. That is the only way that Singapore can continue to be exceptional.

6. The PAP was the vehicle which enabled Mr Lee and his team to take Singapore from Third World to First. They formed the Party in 1954, 69 years ago. They built up the Party machinery, campaigned for the people's support, won elections, and took office. Mr Lee became our first Prime Minister. In government, he laid out his vision, galvanised the population, and implemented policies that transformed Singapore.

7. But Mr Lee was not a one-man act. He achieved what he did with the help of many good people who worked with him in Cabinet, in Parliament, and in the unions and in the Party. PAP activists and leaders at the grassroots toiled on the

ground, addressed constituents' needs, and built support for the PAP and what it stood for. That was how the PAP won Singaporeans' trust and support, retained it and that is how we still do it today. Our members continue serving the people selflessly, month after month, year after year.

8. Today, more than 400 Party activists will receive their awards. The awards recognise their long and outstanding service to the Party. Leading the list is Mrs Lim Hwee Hua, who will be receiving the Meritorious Service Medal. Hwee Hua served previously as an MP and a Minister. After she left politics in 2011, she made herself very helpful, quietly in the background, keeping former MPs in touch with the party and one another, mentoring and advising our new MPs, how to cope with the stresses and strains of the job, how to serve the constituents well. Thank you Hwee Hua for your dedication and support!

9. Besides the award recipients, many more party activists work away quietly day in and day out, to help build our community and nation. You wear Party whites, you go from house to house, you talk to voters, explain to the people what the government is doing to make life better for us all, and to convey ground concerns and help to solve people's problems. There is no substitute for staying in close touch with people, for being there for them, for nurturing their trust, and showing them, by deed and personal example, that the PAP is on their side. Thank you comrades, every one of you!

10. I especially want to recognise our activists in opposition wards in Hougang, in Aljunied, and in Sengkang. They have a tough job, showing the party's presence,

fighting against the current. They do good work, making sure the Opposition don't get a free pass. They are doing their best to win the constituencies back for the PAP. And sooner or later, they will. We owe a big thanks to all of them.

11. Let me mention specifically Hougang Branch Chair Lee Hong Chuang, and Sengkang East Branch Chair Ling Weihong. Hong Chuang and Weihong have led their branches well, and worked their ground diligently. In Hougang SMC Jackson Lam will be taking over from Hong Chuang. In Sengkang East, Marcus Loh will be taking over from Weihong and will be working with his Sengkang GRC teammates, led by Comrade Dr Lam Pin Min. The Party will give them our full support.

12. The PAP continues to play a crucial role in Singapore. As a Party, we mobilise our activists, rally public support, win votes, and secure fresh mandates at each GE. In this Party Convention, in the year of LKY100, we should reflect on Mr Lee's philosophy and ethos, specifically what it meant for Singapore politics and for the PAP. Mr Lee always emphasised three things about the Party. First, we have to govern competently; secondly, we have to uphold high standards of integrity; and thirdly, we have to fight hard to win elections. After all these years in government, these three points remain valid and crucial.

### **Governing Competently**

13. The first basic requisite is that we must govern competently. We are elected not just to occupy office, or to be popular, or to seek power for the sake of power. We fight to form the government so that we can serve Singaporeans: to make

decisions on their behalf, to solve their problems, to improve their lives, and constantly to watch over the nation to keep it safe and secure.

14. Mr Lee advocated clear, strong, governance. As the government, we have to be on top of our responsibilities, be clear what needs to be done, and act decisively and promptly both on opportunities and problems. We must be prepared to take the hard decisions, and have the courage to do the right thing for Singapore, even if this incurs short-term political costs. If we are not able or ready to do that, we should get out of the way.

15. For more than 60 years, the PAP has provided Singapore with this firm good government. We pushed through countless policies and decisions despite initial doubts and resistance: National Service; clearing slums and resettling people from kampungs into HDB flats; building Jurong Industrial Estate; saving prudently year after year, squirreling a little bit aside, building up our reserves; and introducing the GST. Again and again, we took tough decisions for the long-term. Our policies worked, the country progressed, and people's lives improved beyond recognition. That is why voters continued to give their mandate to the PAP. And that is why the PAP has been able to keep on taking Singapore forward and upward.

16. In the current term of office, the PAP government has continued to do its best. We kept Singapore safe through COVID-19. We saved lives and livelihoods; we brought Singapore through the pandemic in much better shape than many other countries.

17. Even as we battled COVID-19, we kept our eyes on many other balls. We partnered employers and unions to preserve jobs and get the economy back on track. We pressed on with economic restructuring, we pushed businesses to digitalise, we supported Singaporeans to upskill and where needed pivot to new jobs.

18. We also tackled urgent, top-of-mind concerns of Singaporeans. We accelerated BTO construction to clear HDB's backlog, and we are introducing Plus and Prime flats to keep public housing affordable and accessible. We helped households to cope with the increasing cost of living. By letting the Singapore dollar appreciate, every time you go overseas to shop, every time you go on an overseas weekend trip, you say we have a strong dollar, this is a benefit for Singaporeans. We provide immediate help through support packages, successive support packages and enhanced support packages as the situation changes and as people's needs emerge. We work out packages to address those needs and help people through a difficult spot. We also invest in people, so that, Singaporeans can fend for themselves in uncertain times.

19. Internationally, we have maintained Singapore's high standing. Amidst increasing geopolitical rivalry, we continue to strengthen our friendships with both the US and China, and with our international partners. Closer to home, with Indonesia, President Jokowi and I have settled several longstanding issues (Airspace, Defence Cooperation Agreement, Extradition Treaty). We signed the agreement in Bintan, January 2022 and they have been ratified and are being implemented. This was an important "win-win" for both sides. With Malaysia, I

have just held a good Leaders' Retreat with PM Anwar Ibrahim. We are discussing some important bilateral issues even as we expand our cooperation.

20. We are also watching closely events in the Middle East. The recent re-eruption of the Israel-Palestinian conflict has impacted Singapore. Like people elsewhere in the world, Singaporeans identify with the plight of the Palestinian people. Muslim Singaporeans especially have felt this strongly. But all Singaporeans are appalled by the human suffering in Gaza as Israel attacks targets there, as they were by Hamas' terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians on 7 October that prompted these IDF military operations. The quarrel between the Israelis and Palestinians is not our quarrel, but it impacts our society. The Government has to take a national position that upholds our consistent principles, and which considers the sentiments and the feelings of our population. We feel sympathy for the civilian victims on both sides, and will extend humanitarian help to those in need. But we must not let problems elsewhere widen fault lines in our society. Let us indeed build upon and strengthen our social harmony.

21. Beyond these urgent matters, we made longer term decisions to prepare for the future. For example, we are increasing GST. A difficult decision, but unfortunately an unavoidable one, if we are to fund the growing healthcare needs of an ageing population. We also changed our policies on sensitive social issues, we repealed s377A and we allowed nurses to wear the tudung with their uniforms. These policy changes could easily have set off contentious debates, we could easily have ended up quarrelling with ourselves over them. But I decided to tackle them, because I knew that if I kicked the can down the road, I would just be storing up

problems for my successors. And fortunately, we handled them well, and they have gone done and been accepted calmly by everyone. For the last 16 months, DPM Lawrence Wong and the 4G Ministers have partnered Singaporeans from all walks of life to plan ahead to secure our future. Recently, DPM Lawrence published the Forward SG report. It aims to refresh our social compact and redefine success. It is a holistic plan, covering education, jobs, housing, healthcare, and many other aspects of Singaporean life. It is a blueprint to give all Singaporeans, regardless of their station in life, every chance to fulfil their dreams and aspirations.

22. Tackling a global pandemic, solving immediate problems, and planning for the future, all at the same time – this is what people expect of a competent and efficient government. But these things do not happen by magic. A lot of hard work goes into making Singapore run smoothly. When you see something which happened just right. You know it didn't just happen. Somebody thought about it, planned it, arranged it, made sure and delivered for Singapore. When the next GE comes, you ask me when, whenever that may be, the PAP can in good conscience tell Singaporeans, report to Singaporeans that we have served them well, and we have done a lot together.

### **Upholding Integrity**

23. Besides delivering results as a government, to maintain the trust and support of Singaporeans, we must uphold the high standards of integrity that Singaporeans have come to expect of the PAP.



24. All of us here wear PAP whites – simple, recognisable, symbolising our commitment to honesty and incorruptibility. This commitment is absolutely non-negotiable. We have maintained it for over 60 years now, rigorously enforcing discipline and keeping the party clean. We have made Singapore one of the cleanest, least corrupt countries, not just in Asia, but in the world.

25. But it is not always so easy to do. However strict our discipline, however zealous our enforcement, human nature being what it is, somewhere, sometime, someone will be tempted and will go astray. It happened even while Mr Lee was Prime Minister – there were sporadic corruption cases involving Ministers and Ministers of States. And recently, as you know, CPIB discovered a case involving a Minister, which is currently being investigated. It is particularly when we are tested that we must show our mettle. Put our principles into action, regardless of any embarrassment or political cost. Deal with the matter without fear or favour, and get to the bottom of the matter. Show Singaporeans and the world that after half a century in government, the PAP's standards remain as high as ever.

26. Singapore is a small place, and our system works. If you do something improper, sooner or later it will come to light. When it does, you will be investigated. And if it is proved that you did something wrong, you are out, and consequences will follow.

27. This applies not just to Ministers or to Party leaders. We expect the same of every party member. If you wear white, you must be white. Whether in your party responsibilities or private dealings, never bring yourself or the Party into disrepute.

28. Do not abuse your position. Do not accept any favours, still less ask for them. It is shameful, it is wrong. Remember: you are a member of the People's Action Party. The name of the Party says it all – your duty is to serve the people, to act on behalf of the people, and never of yourself.

29. It is not just about keeping individual Party leaders and members clean. It is also about keeping the whole Singapore system clean. And that includes keeping corrupting influences out of Singapore. Take for example the recent spectacular money laundering case. The police arrested a dozen people. They seized nearly \$3 bn worth of money, houses, luxury cars, gold bars, watches, handbags. Bearbricks – I never knew what Bearbricks were, but now I know what pleasure that it gives people, but some people do, good luck to them. But if you are going to bring it here, make sure it is a clean Bearbrick.

30. One journalist asked me whether in promoting family offices and our financial industry, we are letting standards slip in order to attract unclean money to come to Singapore. My answer is not on your life. We will never let our standards slip. It is not worth it. If we let it happen, if we relaxed and closed one eye and let dirty money in, what will happen to us? The doubtful characters would come, they would spend generously to make themselves appear respectable, to show that they love Singapore, to ingratiate themselves to us, to try to get PR and citizenship. They would cultivate ministers and officials, they will donate to good causes, they will make themselves useful in all sorts of ways. You want to renovate your CC, no problem. You need welfare fund, no problem. You need an orchestra, also can. And very soon our whole system would be tainted, and then corrupted. It is not worth

it. So that is why when our law enforcement agencies picked up suspicious warning signs two years ago, we watched carefully to learn more about the network, and then at the right moment swooped down simultaneously and crippled it. We will never let our system go corrupt. Everybody who does business here, whether you are a non-Singaporean or Singaporean, must know that this is how things work in Singapore.

31. Our integrity and honesty must never be compromised; and only in that way can we do justice and uphold the trust that Singaporeans have given us.

### **Winning Votes, Winning Elections**

32. Besides governing well, and keeping ourselves clean and incorrupt, the PAP also has to prepare well, to fight and win elections. Our policies may be working, our arguments may be correct. But conviction, support, and votes are harder to win. Singaporeans must be convinced that we are on their side. We have to engage widely, present and communicate our policies well, and help Singaporeans understand how they and their families benefit from these policies. We have to show them what is at stake, and inspire them to fight hard together with us for a better future. We also need to counter opposition moves to undermine the government, show them up when they are less than upfront, and defeat their tactics to create doubt and sow confusion. On the ground, MPs, branch chairmen and activists, you have to work with voters day after day, so that they form close personal bonds with you, identify with you, warm to you, and are loyal to you.

Politics is not just about grand ideas and big policies, but also about individual human relationships and personal loyalties and connections.

33. Mr Lee used to say: Every time the PAP won a general election, the very next morning he would begin thinking about how to win the next one. Because an election is not a 9-day sprint; it is a 5-year marathon. In fact, since 1959, the PAP has won 14 general elections in a row.

34. There is a history to how the PAP came to be so dominant. The Party was not born dominant – far from it. The first two elections – in 1959 and 1963 – were hard fought. It was touch and go in those first few years. We were almost defeated by the communists. But Mr Lee and his colleagues fought back ferociously, and ultimately successfully. After we entered Malaysia, we might have been squelched by the communalists. But again, Mr Lee and his colleagues refused to be cowed, and eventually the Malaysian PM decided it was best to let Singapore go. After independence, the main opposition party – the left wing, pro-communist Barisan Sosialis – declared that our independence was a sham, and they got all the MPs to quit Parliament. That left the field empty. The PAP expanded to occupy all the ground, and in 1968, in the general election, it won 80% of the votes and 100% of the parliamentary seats. This was a major reason why Singapore could progress so quickly and so well, over the years. Since then, we have won every election decisively. Over the years we have lost some seats, but even till now the PAP has maintained its dominant position.

35. But with each successive election, the PAP's task has become harder. The world changes, the generations change, Singapore changes. We are now three generations down the road. Three generations have grown up with the PAP at the helm. In fact, for most Singaporeans today, the PAP is the only Government they have known.

36. Singaporeans' expectations have evolved. They hope to do much better for themselves. They expect much more from the government.

37. Also quite a few hope to see more alternative voices in Parliament, even though the majority overwhelming agrees that the PAP should continue to govern Singapore – in fact, even the opposition parties think so and say so! But such people think more Opposition MPs will provide stronger checks and balances and they want the PAP government to feel more pressure to perform, put a bit more chilli on the tail, they will run a bit faster.

38. I think it is fair to say that the PAP faces a political quandary which is unique in the world: An overwhelming majority of the voters want us to form the government. In fact, they expect the PAP to form the government. But among those who want us to form the government, quite a significant proportion also want our opponents to do better! In this new political world, the PAP has to work harder and harder to win elections. And in between elections, we have to spend more time and energy on politics, which inevitably means at the expense of energy spent on policies.

39. Now with more Opposition MPs in Parliament, we spend more time debating issues big and small. Constructive and responsible political debate is good and necessary. Through debate we answer questions, we clarify trade-offs, we explain policies, and we sharpen ideas. This is the ideal, but actual debate in Parliament does not always reach this level. Not infrequently, it becomes a political brawl. The opposition tries to score political points. The government does its best to explain its considerations and the constraints, and why the opposition's proposals may not work. And so it goes, in a repeated cycle. It becomes a political game. Some of this is to be expected. That is the way parliamentary democracies are meant to work. But if goes too far, and we expend more energies debating one another, manoeuvring for political advantage, rather than tackling national issues. Then problems will go unsolved, society may well become divided, Singapore and Singaporeans will suffer. Therefore, I say having more Opposition MPs does not necessarily make for a better government.

40. We have seen how in other countries, even those that call themselves "mature democracies", politics has grown increasingly polarised. Parties pander to populist positions, they play up identity politics, and they hold the country hostage by refusing to implement essential policies, even refusing to pass national budgets to shut down the government. For example the US is no stranger to political gridlock between the Democrats and the Republicans. Now, it is worse, from gridlock to paralysis. Recently there was a political stalemate in the US. The previous Speaker of the House was Republican, made a deal with the Democrats to keep the government running past a temporary budget, to avoid a government shutdown. Because he made a deal, because he compromised, his own Republicans, the party

kicked him out from the Speakership. And then they had to elect a new Speaker and it saw bitter political infighting, this time amongst the Republican Party themselves. So the Americans are split, not just Republicans versus Democrats, but within each part, the radicals versus the moderates, unable to agree, unable to compromise, unable to get together to govern the country as it needs to be governed. As a result, for weeks, Congress could not function. And they have got a new Speaker, but I would not say all of their problems have been solved. Everybody who wishes the US well feels sad to see such difficulties.

41. And we say, not here in Singapore. But it could happen to Singapore too if our politics goes wrong. So as Singaporeans, we must manage our politics better, and at all costs we must avoid running into such problems. The PAP has to work harder and smarter to explain to Singaporeans what is at stake. What we risk losing if we don't get our politics right? What happens if we do not continue to win strong mandates from the voters?

42. I have been in government for almost 40 years now. Let me tell you straight: There was no way that the government could have taken the long view, could have planned long-term, and adopted tough but necessary policies, if we had constantly had to worry whether we would still be there after the next elections. Today's Singapore could not have been built by a weak government hanging on to power by a slim majority, or with the governing party and policies chopping and changing after each election. We succeeded in building this place up only because the PAP enjoyed the full support of Singaporeans, maintained their support, lived up to it, showed them that we could be trusted and delivered, and made something which

all of us can be proud of. This was a nation and is a nation of lions led by lions. If we have a nation of lions disunited and led by unworthy leaders, we would have come to grief long ago. It hasn't happened and must never happen.

43. Of course, the possibility of the PAP being challenged, of another party winning and taking over, that possibility is always there, and it always has to be there – that is how parliamentary democracy works, that is the essence of democracy. You are not that as a right but you are there as long as you enjoy the trust and the support of the people. But if a significant fraction of Singaporeans want the PAP to be checked by the opposition, and more opposition members are voted into Parliament, the political dynamic will change. Future elections will not be about how many seats the opposition would win or should win. They will be about which party forms the majority, to form the next government. They will be about whether the winning party receives a strong enough mandate, and has enough capable MPs, to form a competent Cabinet and govern Singapore well and for the long term.

44. The opposition parties tell voters: Don't worry, we don't aim to form the next government, so you can vote for the Opposition, you don't have to fear, I won't be in charge, vote for me. Don't worry, even if the PAP has a majority of just one, it will continue to think long term, and look after your future, even if it is hanging on by its fingernails, in fact, may think harder. Don't worry, our neighbours won't think that we are weak, and they won't be tempted to push Singapore around. And don't worry, just give us a few more seats in Parliament, so that more opposition MPs can



check, weaken and hem in the Government, even though we can't form it, never mind, just give us a few more.

45. But with lives and futures at stake, voters must worry. Think of your children, think of your grandchildren, think of how Singapore got to where we are today. Take your vote very seriously and give it to the party you trust to keep us together, to build a Singapore that is fit for your kids and that would be there for their kids.

46. Mr Lee once said that his concern was not whether the PAP can continue to govern Singapore, but whether Singapore can continue to be well-governed, whichever party is in charge. I understand him, that is true, it is an Olympian view, but speaking as somebody who is responsible for the party, it is our duty as the PAP, to make sure that we will do a good job, to make sure that there is a good team, a good choice which Singaporeans can vote for when they go to the polls. There are countries where, when they go to the polls, and they ask you which party should I vote for? You may have to say honestly, I don't know because all of them worry you. In Singapore, when people go to the polls, there must always be one party which they are confident in, which deserves their trust, which they can in good conscience vote for and which if they ask you whom to vote for, you can tell them on the heart of hearts, vote for you own good, vote for the PAP.

47. That is why, comrades, we all have to work hard, articulate our vision clearly, keep Singapore's long-term interests front and centre, deliver on good policies that benefit Singaporeans and maintain the integrity and trust. Keep our brand and convince voters to give us their mandate once more.

## Leadership Transition

48. I have spoken about three priorities for the Party: governing competently, keeping clean, and winning elections.

49. To do all these well, will always require high quality leadership. Right now, we have a strong, capable top team, right combination of grey hair and dark hair, one that is in touch with Singaporeans, that has shown what it can do. Singapore needs an outstanding “First Team” of leaders – who, on top of mastering the politics, can also deliver good government for Singapore.

50. We have a very good public service. Sometimes people argue that Singapore civil servants are so good, that we don’t need Ministers who are so competent or experienced. The civil servants know what to do, they will put up papers. You just have to say yes or no. And Singapore will continue to run smoothly. It is a crazy argument. The civil service didn’t create itself out of thin air. We have a good civil service precisely because we have had good political leadership who built up a world-class civil service. Recruitment, management, policies, training, scholarships, building a team, imbuing them with the ethos to serve, shaping an instrument which serves Singapore well. When you don’t notice them, that means they are doing a good job. In crisis, you notice that it is because of them and the government, that they are able to come through. So the civil servants are excellent but they can only deliver good results because they are led by competent ministers, who understand the issues, who make good decisions, who command their respect. Because only then can ministers guide and complement the civil servants in their

work, and deliver on their political promises. If the minister is not on top of his job, if the Permanent Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries, the Directors and the junior officers know that this is a minister who depends on the draft he is given, to read his speech. The minister is finished and Singapore is in deep trouble. It is like an orchestra: it may have the best musicians in the world, but without a good conductor it cannot produce great music. In fact, if the players are not impressed with their conductor, they may leave the orchestra to perform under some other maestro's baton, and you will be left with a mediocre orchestra. And even if you change the conductor then, it is too late.

51. We saw this vividly in the pandemic. The ministries and agencies performed magnificently. All the people whom we have given the COVID-19 medals to, fully deserve their award. But without the ministers to make the big, risky decisions, to take political responsibility for them, to provide national leadership, we could not have come through as we did. All the big decisions, whether closing our borders to foreign arrivals, imposing the Circuit Breaker, pre-ordering COVID-19 vaccines, spending more than a billion dollars, sign first, see product later, draw on reserves to save jobs and save the economy. All these were political decisions, initiated and taken either by the MTF, the Multi-Ministry Taskforce which Lawrence chaired, or by the Cabinet. The Ministers had to make these decisions, they had to push for these decisions. They had to decide and sell these decisions, carry them and make them work. And it has to be so. If you don't have a good First Team, you are in very deep trouble. After COVID-19, to us is a bad dream, to other countries, it is a continuing, recurring nightmare. Because it went so badly, it went so bitterly. Now they are having post-mortems, analysis, replays on what went wrong, explaining all

the things that went down the tubes, when people didn't know their jobs, and people didn't do their duties. It didn't happen in Singapore and for that, I shall always be grateful.

52. So remember: if we have ordinary political leaders, we will have an ordinary public service, and this is going to become a very ordinary country. For other countries, it is fine. There are 200 other countries in the world and you are one of them, somewhere there, you will be somewhere. But if one day this little red dot is no longer shines brightly and is exceptional, if it cannot stand out compared to other countries in the world, you are nowhere, you are sunk. So leadership renewal is a critical process for the Party, and for Singapore.

53. The next GE is going to coincide with the leadership transition to the 4G team. This transition has been underway for quite a while now. As I reported at the National Day Rally this year, after COVID-19, my succession plans are back on track.

54. The Ministers have chosen DPM Lawrence to be their leader. The PAP MPs have endorsed this choice. There is only one major decision left to make. They say in Chinese 万事俱备，只欠东风， everything is ready, only the East Wind await. What is that major decision? Should the handover take place before the next GE, or after? Either I can continue to lead the party into the next GE, which would be my fifth as PM, and then handover soon afterwards to Lawrence; or I can hand over to Lawrence before the GE, then he leads the party into the campaign, wins his own mandate, and takes the country forward with the full backing of the nation.

55. Leadership transition for any country is always tricky. Many things can go awry. Both Singaporeans and people outside Singapore, near and far, are watching closely. Everything depends on the success of this third transition in our history. I have thought this over carefully, discussed it thoroughly with Lawrence and the Ministers, both 3G and 4G.

56. Lawrence and the 4G team have been serving for many years now. They have taken on greater responsibilities, and they are preparing well to take the helm. They earned their spurs during COVID-19. And increasingly, they are setting the national agenda. They partnered Singaporeans in the Forward SG exercise. And their recent report sets out a substantial agenda. They have committed themselves to much hard work and many major initiatives. They are actively bringing in more people to further strengthen the team. Lawrence has told me that he is ready and this morning you heard him tell you that he is ready for his next assignment. I have full confidence in Lawrence and his team and there is no reason to delay the political transition.

57. Therefore, I intend to hand over to DPM Lawrence before the next general election. After that, I will be at the new PM's disposal. I will go wherever he thinks I can be useful. I will do my best to help him and his team to fight and win the next GE. I want to help him to fulfil his responsibilities leading the country so that Singapore can continue to succeed beyond me and my 3G colleagues, for many years to come.

58. I am already 71 years old. Because of COVID-19, I missed my previous target which was to hand over and step down before I was 70 years old. But next year is the PAP's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary. So if all goes well, I will hand over by the PAP's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday next year – it's not my birthday, but I will borrow it for this purpose.

## **Conclusion**

59. It has been my great fortune and honour to have served the country, first in the SAF, and then in Party and government, for all of my adult life. I have been PM for almost 20 years. Singapore and the PAP have been thoroughly transformed, shaped by our many trials and tribulations. But some things never change. We still wear whites, and we still formally address one another as comrades. We remain dedicated to Singapore, and we still feel the call of duty to serve the people, we still have the duty to future generations to keep this island safe and secure. These things have not changed under my watch, and they will not change under the 4G team. I ask each of you to give Lawrence and his team your full support. Help them win a strong mandate and work with them to take Singapore to greater heights. Thank you very much.