

**Speech by Prime Minister Lawrence Wong,  
for #refreshPAP, 8 June 2024**

Comrades, Activists and Friends, Brothers and Sisters from NTUC, Friends of the PAP

**Introduction**

1. Very good to be here this morning for this PAP Event.
2. Last year, we had the PAP Awards and Conference, I spoke then about the need for the party to refresh itself, so that we can serve Singaporeans better.
3. We know that the political environment in Singapore is changing. We cannot take it for granted that the PAP will automatically form the next government.
  - a. But for now we are the Government of the day.
  - b. So it is our responsibility as a party to chart out how we can take Singapore forward, forge a strong partnership with Singaporeans, and convince them that PAP remains the right choice to lead this country.
4. That is why over the last 6 months, we embarked on this Refresh PAP exercise, led by Minister Desmond Lee and other 4G leaders.
  - a. Over **2300 activists** across all our branches participated.
  - b. Big shout out to the activists who went over and beyond to organise and facilitate the engagement sessions.
  - c. Whatever role you played, whether as a facilitator or just as an active participant, we thank everyone of you for your commitment, your suggestions and ideas. Thank you very much, all of you.
5. During the engagements, we affirmed the PAP's longstanding commitment to be the party for all Singaporeans.
  - a. We recognised the need for us to do more to achieve this goal.
  - b. We heard many good ideas on how the Party can build a deeper bond with Singaporeans, and be in step with their diverse aspirations and concerns.

- c. Today, let me briefly share our plans in three areas, how we **Engage Wider, Communicate Better, and Organise Stronger.**

## **Engaging Wider**

6. We know there are many issues which Singaporeans feel strongly about, from bread-and-butter concerns such as jobs and housing to social issues like inequality and mental health, as well as longer-term challenges like climate change.

7. Our PAP MPs regularly engage various groups to hear your views around these issues, and initiate discussions on how we can better address your concerns. One avenue we do this is through the PAP Government Parliamentary Committees (GPCs).

8. Our PAP MPs will step up their engagement efforts through the GPCs. We want to engage not just our own activists, but also wider community groups and stakeholders, so that they can represent your views, and we can have more effective discussions and debates in Parliament.

9. Besides the GPCs, we also have various PAP Groups organised around demographics, e.g. the Women's Wing, Young PAP, PAP Seniors Group etc. These groups have been active in engaging their respective communities. But increasingly, the key challenges we face cut across traditional demographic lines.

10. Hence, arising from the feedback and suggestions, we will therefore set up two new groups within the Party focussing on Mental Health and Climate.

11. Dr Janil Puthuchery will lead the **Mental Health Group**. And Dr Koh Poh Koon will lead the **Climate Action Group**.

12. Why are we doing this?

- a. Because these are two key issues that are also of national importance, and of priority for the PAP Government

- b. As a Party, we want to use these groups to better engage our activists and also all stakeholders, be it healthcare professionals, environmental groups, community organisations, or individuals.
- c. If you have views or ideas around these issues, come and join the Groups. You can be an activist, you can already be in the Young PAP or Senior Group, but you can still join the groups. You may not be an activist, you may just be a citizen with an interest in these issues – join the groups too. We will engage you, involve you in our deliberations and discussions, and through these interactions, the Groups will seek to better inform and shape the PAP Government's policies and plans in these two areas.

13. To our party activists, supporters, and fellow Singaporeans alike, my message is: We want to **hear your views**. We want to hear your feedback and suggestions. Let us **find common cause** and **work together** to make Singapore better.

### **Communicating Better**

14. We will communicate better with Singaporeans.
- a. This is one area where the PAP gets a lot of feedback.
  - b. We thank everyone for your sharing. We will learn and improve.
  - c. As a party in government, some of the communications we do are not party-related. They are Government communications, especially when it comes to explaining government policies.
  - d. But as a political party, we too need to have our own effective communication channels. We cannot just rely on the civil service or government to communicate policies. The party itself needs to have effective communications.
15. Communications covers a wide range. For us as a party, face-to-face communication remains vital. This is traditionally how the party has done its outreach.

- a. Our MPs and Branch activists do this regularly on the ground – through market walkabouts, house visits, dialogue sessions. We put up posters and banners, and we want that face-to-face contact with our residents.
- b. This has been the Party's traditional way of outreach and communication, and we must retain this strength.

16. But we also need to do more through digital channels, so as to amplify our outreach.

- a. We have updated our existing digital channels like FB and IG, and launched new channels like YouTube, TikTok and WhatsApp. We have a team that is focussed on tailoring the content in a way that is suitable for their respective channels.
- b. We have also updated our Party newsletter, Petir, so it can be accessed through not just hardcopy, but also digital means.

17. Through these efforts, I hope Singaporeans gain a better understanding of the PAP, as well as of our Ministers and MPs, what they stand for, what we stand for, and why we do what we do for Singaporeans.

18. More importantly, communication is also two-way. We want to hear from Singaporeans on your views and suggestions, anything from policy suggestions to feedback on how we can serve our neighbourhoods better.

19. I too will strive to do more and do it better.

- a. I will meet the media more regularly – I have said this in a press conference recently. I do intend to meet the media more regularly to address issues of the day and explain why we implement certain policies. Having more regular sessions with the media through press conferences can be useful to explain our thinking and why we are implementing certain policies in a certain way.
- b. I will continue to make use of various social media platforms, to reach out to a wider group of Singaporeans.

- c. I will be doing more ground visits to the different constituencies to engage Singaporeans directly, and to listen and hear your views and feedback.

## **Organising Stronger**

20. Thirdly and finally, how can we organise stronger? To be a Party for all, we must keep our doors open to those who want to join us. The party needs to be a party that serves all Singaporeans, and the PAP strives to be a national movement. Not just a political party, but a national movement for Singapore and Singaporeans.

21. The backbone of the Party is our party activists:

- a. All who stand with us as fellow comrades.
- b. You are committed and steadfast in your service to the Party and to Singapore.
- c. Thank you for your contributions and hard work!

22. Beyond our core group of party members and activists, we have the **Friends of the PAP network**.

- a. Some are here today with us.
- b. Many of you are long-time partners – you have joined hands with us, you have graciously contributed your time and expertise to our efforts too.
- c. You may not be prepared to wear white-on-white and that is fine. As long as you are prepared to make common cause with the party and work with us to build a better Singapore, we welcome you and we thank you for your support.

23. We want to grow this network of PAP friends and partners.

- a. As I said, the PAP is not just about being a political party. We want to build a national movement.

- b. Whether you are a corporate organisation, a social service organisation or individual, if you have new ideas, or just want to lend a hand, or make common cause for a better Singapore, we welcome you to join us.
- c. As long as you find common purpose with the PAP and want to make a contribution to Singapore, we want to work with you. We want to take Singapore forward together.

## **Conclusion**

24. I've shared briefly some of the ideas from the #refreshPAP exercise, around Engaging Wider, Communicating Better, and Organising Stronger.

- a. We have appointed office holders in the party to lead each of these – Desmond Tan (Assistant Organising Secretary), Tan Kiat How (Assistant Organising Secretary) and Low Yen Ling (District Chair).
- b. What I've shared is not an exhaustive list of initiatives. There are many more things that we are doing, a lot more ideas and feedback and suggestions from all of you.
- c. This is not meant to be exhaustive. It is to give a sense of our renewal efforts.
- d. More importantly, today's event is an informal occasion to thank all of you for being part of the #RefreshPAP exercise – to assure you that we are taking your feedback and ideas seriously. We want all of you to join us in this journey of refreshing the PAP.

25. This year is a special year for us. As a party, it marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the PAP.

- a. 70 years is a very long time for a political party, especially a political party that has received a mandate from its people to govern the country throughout this time.
- b. We've continually updated our methods over the years and decades - how we engage, how we outreach, how we organise ourselves.

- c. We have always been updating this, but one thing remains constant: We are always a party that serves the people, that puts the interests of Singaporeans first. We are also a party of action. It is not just about words, but deeds.

26. We are a party that will always strive to make life better for all Singaporeans.

- a. With your unwavering support, with all of you behind this efforts, I am confident that we will refresh the PAP.
- b. More than than, we will reinvigorate our commitment to every Singaporean, and we will review and refresh our social compact as a country.
- c. We will build a brighter future for all and take Singapore forward, together.

27. Thank you.