Lee Kuan Yew

Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore’s first Prime Minister, was an integral figure in transforming the country into the cosmopolitan financial centre spotting a first world skyline it is now.

After graduating from Cambridge University, where he studied Law at Fitzwilliam College and earned a Double Starred First Class Honours, he returned to Singapore to practice as a lawyer before launching his political career in the year 1951. He helped found the People’s Action Party (PAP) and became its Secretary-General in 1954. Thereafter he led the party to win the 1959 Singapore General Election where he was elected Prime Minister of Singapore.

During his premiership, he led Singapore through its merger with Malaysia and later separation and independence in year 1965. The country blossomed into a first world economic hub and the PAP also won the General Elections 8 times under his leadership. In 1990 he was appointed as Senior Minister and later Minister Mentor in 2004.

He has since left cabinet after the 2011 Singapore General Elections to allow the current Prime Minister and also his son, Mr Lee Hsien Loong and his team to govern the country.

Throughout the years, Mr Lee Kuan Yew has published numerous memoirs and books detailing his experience and political journey. His latest book was launched on 29 November 2011 entitled, ‘My Lifelong Challenge: Singapore’s Bilingual Journey’ in conjunction with the Lee Kuan Yew fund for Bilingualism. The fund aims to help children with their first ethnic language otherwise known as mother tongue and English, especially before they reach primary school. This is in line with the country’s efforts to ensure that its future leaders and citizens are well versed in not just the current universal language of English but also individual ethnic languages to preserve the country’s multi-racial culture.

Mr Lee has won numerous honorary awards including the Order of the Companions of Honour (1970), Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St Michael and St George (1972), the Freedom of the City of London (1982), the Seri Paduka Mahkota Johor (1984), the Order of Great Leader (1988) and the Order of the Rising Sun (1967).

In 2002, Mr Lee was formally admitted to the Fellowship of Imperial College London in recognition of his promotion of international trade and industry, and development of science and engineering study initiatives with the UK. In 2006, he was presented with the Woodrow Wilson Award for Public Service by the Woodrow Wilson International Centre for Scholars.

In October 2009, Mr Lee was conferred the first Lifetime Achievement award by the U.S.-Asean Business Council at its 25th anniversary gala dinner in Washington, D.C. He was also named in the TIME 100 list as one of the people who most affect our world on 29 April 2010.

On 14 January 2011, Mr Lee received the inaugural Gryphon Award from his alma mater, Raffles Institution, given to illustrious Rafflesians who have made exceptional contributions to the nation. On 19 October 2011, he received the Lincoln Medal in Washington DC — an honour reserved for
people who have exemplified the legacy and character embodied by former US President Abraham Lincoln.

Mr Lee is married to the late Mdm Kwa Geok Choo with whom they have two sons and a daughter. A Queen’s Scholar from Malaya and also an outstanding Cambridge law graduate, Mdm Kwa has been credited for standing by her spouse and assisting him through the development of the nation. In recognition of her remarkable achievements, the Singapore Management University (SMU) has named its new Law Library, a new Scholars Programme and a top Law Graduate Award after her.

Amongst the hobbies Mr Lee has, he enjoys cycling and swimming.