



DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER
COORDINATING MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC POLICIES
MINISTER FOR FINANCE
SINGAPORE

8 April 2021

Mr Lee Hsien Loong
Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister

More than two years ago, the fourth generation (4G) PAP leadership chose me to lead the team. We have bonded as a team and have worked well together since.

COVID-19 struck last year. The crisis has disrupted lives and livelihoods around the world, and created profound uncertainties. The virus has also accelerated significant structural shifts, such as strategic competition between major powers, discontent with globalisation and the digital revolution. Also, we must deal with the challenges of an ageing population, and a desire for greater diversity in politics.

Our top priority is to deal with the immediate crisis and keep our people safe. I thank you for your commitment to stay on as Prime Minister until the crisis is over, so that you hand over a Singapore that is in good working order to the next leader. Notwithstanding the rollout of vaccinations, the pandemic is still raging worldwide. With new variants emerging, many expect this to be a prolonged crisis.

The next Prime Minister should have a sufficiently long runway – to master the demands of leading our nation; formulate and see through our longer-term strategies for our country; and win the confidence and support of Singaporeans to build this shared future together. This long-term orientation of successive PAP governments and the support of our people have been critical to Singapore’s success.

This year, I am 60. As the crisis will be prolonged, I would be close to the mid-60s when the crisis is over. The 60s are still a very productive time of life. But when I also consider the ages at which our first three Prime Ministers took on the job, I would have too short a runway should I become the next Prime Minister then. We need a leader who will not only rebuild Singapore post-COVID-19, but also lead the next phase of our nation-building effort.

When I had a stroke in 2016, you and Cabinet colleagues were unstinting with your support. With the great work of my medical team, and the care and encouragement of my family, friends and fellow Singaporeans, I was able to recover fully. Having worked with you, ESM Goh Chok Tong and MM Lee Kuan Yew, I know that the top job imposes exceptional demands on the office holder. In a very different post-COVID-19 world, the demands will be even more exacting. While I am in good health today, it is in the best interests of the nation, for someone who is younger to tackle the huge challenges ahead.

After careful deliberation and discussion with my family, I have decided to step aside as leader of the 4G team, so that a younger leader who will have a longer runway can take over. It will be for the 4G team to choose this person, and I stand ready to support the next leader.

I appreciate the support of Singaporeans and have made this decision with the best interests of Singapore and Singaporeans at heart.

I will continue to do my best, to support you, Cabinet colleagues and the Party, so that we can continue to improve the lives of Singaporeans and emerge stronger post-COVID-19.

Let me express my deep appreciation to you, Cabinet colleagues, and my 4G team for your confidence in me, and for the privilege and honour to serve Singapore together with you. I also thank ESM Goh, who has been my mentor since my time at the MAS.

Yours sincerely,



HENG SWEE KEAT

cc:

Ministers

Speaker of Parliament

Secretary General, NTUC