



*Prime Minister  
Singapore*

21 April 2025

Dr Ng Eng Hen  
Minister for Defence

Dear *Eng Hen,*

As you retire from politics, I would like to put on record my deep appreciation for your many years of service to Singapore.

In 2001, you left a successful surgical career to take on what you described as the “road less travelled” – entering politics to make a difference for Singapore and your fellow Singaporeans. You have certainly done so across every portfolio you helmed.

You began at the Ministry of Manpower at a difficult time, as we were recovering from the SARS outbreak. You worked closely with our tripartite partners to uplift lower-wage workers, improve job security, and enhance workplace safety. You spearheaded major reforms to reduce workplace injuries and fatalities and introduced the Workplace Safety and Health Act. Recognising the need for lifelong learning, you set up the Workforce Development Agency (now Workforce Singapore) to help workers reskill and upskill, so they can always have good jobs.

You foresaw the importance of financial security in old age. The concept of longevity insurance, which you championed, laid the groundwork for the CPF LIFE scheme – providing Singaporeans with peace of mind in their retirement years.

As Minister for Education, you expanded tertiary pathways for our students. You established the Singapore University of Technology and Design to train future leaders to serve society through innovative work in design and technology. You strengthened the Polytechnic-Foreign Specialised Institution initiative, which paved the way for the Singapore Institute of Technology, our fifth Autonomous University. Singapore’s third medical school, the Lee Kong Chian School of Medicine in the Nanyang Technological University, was established under your leadership. You also supported our educators, and helped to set up the Academy of Singapore Teachers to spearhead their professional development.

You are best known for your tenure as Minister for Defence. You have helmed MINDEF since 2011. You guided the modernisation of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), ensuring that it stayed ahead amidst more complex threat environments and fast-moving technological shifts. Under your leadership, the SAF acquired and developed next generation capabilities – from F-35 fighter jets and invincible-class submarines to unmanned systems across land, sea and air. You also led the establishment of the Digital and Intelligence Service, to strengthen our capabilities in the digital, cyber and information domains.

Under your leadership the SAF not only stood ready for battle, but proved its worth in peacetime. Domestically, it played a critical role supporting our Covid-19 response operations. Regionally, it led cooperation platforms like the Regional Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Coordination Centre and Counter Terrorism Information Centre. Around the world, it delivered critical assistance to those in need, including most recently humanitarian support for civilians in Gaza.

You never lost sight of the people who form the heart of the SAF. You championed realistic training while improving safety for soldiers. You oversaw the development of SAFTI City to provide our soldiers with a realistic facility for urban warfare training, and set up the Inspector-General's office to strengthen safety in the SAF. You improved our system of National Service, enhanced public support for our NS personnel, and established the SAF Volunteer Corps to allow the broader community to contribute directly to defence.


You made a strong mark on the international stage as Singapore's chief defence diplomat – respected by your counterparts for your clarity of thought and incisive assessments. Through your efforts, Singapore built strong defence ties around the world, expanded our strategic space and strengthened our standing globally.

I have always valued your thoughtful perspectives in our Cabinet discussions. Whatever the subject, you would get to the heart of the matter – asking incisive questions, expressing clear views, and offering decisive recommendations. You were steady in crises, thoughtful in analysing problems, and bold in imaging fresh possibilities. You brought weight and steadiness to our deliberations, and you have been a tremendous asset to the team.

I have experienced all this personally during my early years in politics, when I had the chance to work with you in MINDEF. I still remember our monthly lunches and the generous sharing of your experiences and insights. I know many of the younger ministers have also looked up to you – not just as a role model, but as someone they can turn to for advice and encouragement.

You also served as Leader of the House from 2011 and 2015. Many of us remember your moving tribute to the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew, which highlighted his vision, tenacity and unwavering commitment to Singapore. In Bishan-Toa Payoh, you have been a steady anchor and the GRC's longest-serving Member of Parliament, deeply committed to your residents and their well-being.

In these and many other ways, you have shaped Singapore. On behalf of all Singaporeans, I thank you for your dedication and service. I wish you and your family all the very best in this next chapter.

Yours *Sincerely,*  


**Lawrence Wong**