

**On Mr Lee Kuan Yew's 90th birthday...**

# He shows up for work against doctor's advice

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**I**F IT'S your 90th birthday, would you turn up for work?  
 That's what former prime minister Lee Kuan Yew did yesterday.

And against doctor's advice no less, revealed Leader of the House Ng Eng Hen as he read a tribute to Mr Lee in Parliament yesterday.

His appearance drew a standing ovation from his fellow Members of Parliament.

"He forged the nation which today, is admired worldwide for its prosperity, harmony and stability.

"In lifting an entire nation, and improving countless lives of Singaporeans of several generations, Mr Lee Kuan Yew has left a lasting legacy for all of us, and achieved greatness," said the Minister for Defence.

But why did he make the special effort to appear in parliament yesterday?

**Special place**

Parliament holds a special place in Mr Lee's heart, said Nominated Member of Parliament Eugene Tan.

"He has been a legislator first since 1955. Getting a strong mandate from the people was central to his political longevity. Parliament was where he was involved in the cut and thrust of debate and where he sought to explain policies and engage with his critics.

"I think he was also trying to show the MPs that Parliament has a special and important role in how Singapore is governed," said Assoc Prof Tan.

Birthday wishes and accolades had been pouring in from all over the world. At



**CELEBRATION:** MPs celebrate Mr Lee Kuan Yew's birthday in the Members' Room yesterday. PICTURE: MCI

90, Mr Lee is one of the oldest parliamentarians in the world.

Only 25 of the 90 sitting MPs and non-constituency MPs were born when Mr Lee became Singapore's first prime minister in 1959.

That year, Law and Foreign Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam, Health Minister Gan Kim Yong, and Ms Denise Phua were born. The oldest then was Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, who was 18.

Ms Sylvia Lim, Mr Zainal Sapari, Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman and Mr Yee Jenn Jong were all born in the year that Singapore and Malaysia split in 1965, a historic event which saw Mr Lee Kuan Yew shed tears during the announcement.

Ms Tin Pei Ling, currently the youngest MP at age 30, said: "In all my life, I've known Mr Lee as the founding PM of Singapore. He and his team went through tumultuous times and tremendous struggle

to create modern Singapore.

"He is a great man whom I deeply respect and he continues to inspire new generations of Singaporeans with his wisdom, strength and deep commitment for Singapore."

According to the MPs, it was a simple celebration at the member's room after they exited the chambers.

The birthday song was sang in three languages, English, Mandarin and Malay, and there was a cake in the shape of the number 90.

Mr Lee also made a short speech, where he highlighted the importance of a clean and honest government.

MP Seah Kian Peng said: "To reach the age of 90 is worth a celebration for anyone.

"And Mr Lee is no ordinary person, leader, or statesman."

**- Additional reporting by Ben Nadarajan**

*"It was a simple ceremony and he was in good spirits. A few of us gave him a birthday card. It is a real privilege to work with him. He still keeps an eye on municipal matters."*

- Dr Chia Shi Lu, MP for Tanjong Pagar GRC, where Mr Lee Kuan Yew is also an MP

*"We were fortunate to have a few wise words from him. He could have chosen many topics but he spoke with strong conviction about the importance of a clean and honest government."*

- Mr Zaqy Mohamad, MP for Choa Chu Kang GRC

*"The fact that he turned up today showed that he still has the interest of our country at heart. He is not involved in policy-making now but he is still an icon of Singapore."*

- Mr Baey Yam Keng, Tampines GRC MP. He was in Tanjong Pagar GRC with Mr Lee Kuan Yew from 2006 to 2011

*"As the birthday song was sung, many felt quite emotional and privileged to be in the moment as he took the extra effort to appear and join this occasion. When he spoke a few words, there was total silence - he just had the presence and command."*

- Marine Parade GRC MP Seah Kian Peng



**1959**  
 The year when Mr Lee Kuan Yew became PM, they were born



Law & Foreign Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam



Health Minister Gan Kim Yong



MP Denise Phua



**1965**  
 The year when Mr Lee cried on TV after S'pore split from M'sia, they were born



Workers' Party chairman Sylvia Lim



MP Zainal Sapari



Minister of State for National Development & Defence Mohamad Maliki Osman



NCMP Yee Jenn Jong