

A LASTING LEGACY

As the founding father of modern Singapore and its first Prime Minister from 1959 to 1990, Lee Kuan Yew led the island republic's transformation from shanty backwater to bustling metropolis. But his influence and imprint on Singapore go well beyond his decades in office to just about every sphere of life in the country. Here are some of the key socio-economic policies he launched or oversaw:

Late-1950s

- Decided on four official languages for Singapore, with Malay as the national language
- Started first anti-spitting campaign

1960s

- Set up the Housing & Development Board (1960); saw home ownership as a quick way to cement national belonging
- Embarked on Singapore's industrialisation drive and export-oriented economic strategy

- Set up the Economic Development Board (1961), Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (1964), and started development of Jurong Industrial Estate to woo foreign investment

Singapore's 26-foot Merlion sprang into "life" at 8.45pm on Sept 15, 1972, at the touch of a button by PM Lee Kuan Yew.



- Formation of National Trades Union Congress (1961)
- Envisaged a "Clean and Green Singapore"; started first tree-planting campaign (1963)
- Sought international recognition of Singapore's independence upon its separation from Malaysia (1965)

Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew at the press conference at TV Singapore on the separation from Malaysia.



- Chose English as Singapore's lingua franca (1965)
- Established bilingual education policy (1966)
- Introduced mandatory military conscription for all young Singaporean males (1967)
- Laid foundations for a meritocratic bureaucracy
- Regulated industrial relations, making strikes illegal without prior pre-emptive procedures
- Started "Stop at Two" family planning campaign amid soaring birth rates
- Allowed use of CPF savings to buy HDB flats (1968); also started gradual increase in both employers' and employees' CPF contribution rates (1968-1984)

- Launched "Keep Singapore Clean" campaign (1968)



1970s

- Decided that ministers and MPs should be adequately paid, to prevent corruption
- Formation of Monetary Authority of Singapore (1971)
- Formation of National Wages Council (1972)
- Founding of Singapore Airlines (1972), with the split of Malaysia-Singapore Airlines into two entities

- Embarked on building R&D, science, engineering capability for high-value economic activities

- Pushed through relocation of airport from Paya Lebar to Changi (opened in 1981)

- Ordered big clean-up of Singapore River basin, relocation of illegal hawkers, phasing out of pig farms, resettlement of farmers



- Launched first Speak Mandarin campaign (1979); no more dialect programmes on TV and radio

- Set up companies in areas where the private sector lacked capital or expertise, eg Singapore Airlines, Neptune Orient Lines, Development Bank of Singapore and Sembawang Shipyard



- Start of three-year wage correction policy (1979) to push efficient use of labour

1980s

- Launched National Computerisation Plan (1980) to tap info technology
- Launched National Productivity Campaign (1981)
- Pegged ministers' salaries at 80% of their private-sector counterparts' pay (1984)
- Introduced Graduate Mothers Scheme (1984): children of female graduates got preferential school admission while less educated women were offered S\$10,000 to be sterilised after birth of second child
- Launched new "Have Three or More, if You Can Afford It" population policy (1986)
- Post-recession wage restraint policy (1986, 1987), and subsequent flexi-wage policy

1990s

- Introduced ministers' pay formula, pegged to private sector top earners' pay (1994)
- Singapore embarked on building a knowledge-based, innovation-driven economy
- Biomedical sciences identified as a new growth driver

2000s

- Singapore legalises casino gambling and builds two integrated resorts

