

Bilveer Singh



Understanding **Singapore** Politics

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NUS, Singapore

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Understanding
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Key Personalities in Singapore's Politics

Chiam See Tong (1935-present)

A trained lawyer and an Opposition veteran, Chiam See Tong was first elected to Parliament in 1984 as the Member of Parliament (MP) for the Potong Pasir constituency. Until 2011, he was the longest-serving Opposition MP. He founded the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP). Later, he was forced to leave the party following a challenge from Chee Soon Juan. In 1996, he joined the Singapore People's Party (SPP). He spearheaded the formation of the Singapore Democratic Alliance (SDA), being the *de facto* Opposition leader until 2011. In March 2011, the SPP withdrew from the SDA and Chiam contested the 2011 General Elections in a Group Representation Constituency (GRC) in Bishan-Toa Payoh where he lost. Ill-health has, however, prevented him from being active in politics even though he remains a respected and popular political figure nationally.

David Marshall (1908–1995)

David Marshall was Singapore's first Chief Minister and one of the pioneer nationalists who pushed for Singapore's independence. His act of resignation in 1956 following his inability to help Singapore gain its independence, though often viewed as impulsive and irrational, signified the birth of nationalism for the small state. Despite his resignation, he left his mark as a charismatic leader that inspired others to think in terms of Singapore's nationalism and independence.

Devan Nair (1923–2005)

Devan Nair was a leading and famous trade unionist in Singapore. After the Second World War, in the midst of rising nationalism in Singapore, he joined the communist-led Anti-British League. Later in 1954, he became a founding member of the PAP and supported Lee Kuan Yew against the communists. He was the founder of the non-communist National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) in 1961 that largely sealed Singapore's victory against the communists. In 1964, he founded the

Democratic Action Party and won a parliamentary seat in the Malaysian elections. On his return to Singapore in 1969, he continued to lead the NTUC and was elected to the Singapore Parliament from 1979 to 1981. He served as Singapore's third president from 1981 to 1985. He controversially resigned as Singapore's president following Lee Kuan Yew alleging that he needed to be treated for alcoholism. Nair, however, claimed it was due to the clash of political views that led to the acrimony and clash between the Head of State and Head of Government.

Goh Chok Tong (1941-present)

Despite not being Lee Kuan Yew's first choice as successor, Goh Chok Tong became Singapore's second Prime Minister. Prior to this appointment, Goh served as Senior Minister for Trade and Industry, Finance, and Health, and became the Deputy Prime Minister in 1985. His consultative style contrasted Lee's hard authoritative stance, which made him popular among liberal-oriented Singaporeans. He first entered politics in 1976 and also contested the 2015 General Elections, making him the longest-serving MP in Singapore's politics today. Though not in cabinet, he has held the honorary title of Emeritus Senior Minister since 2011.

Goh Keng Swee (1918–2010)

Goh Keng Swee was involved in the Malayan Forum that mulled over the independence of Malaya. In 1959, he won the Kreta Ayer seat and joined the first government under then Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew's leadership as Minister of Finance. He was known as being the key driver of the Singapore economy and also a fervent supporter of merger with Malaysia due to economic considerations. Two years after independence, he became Minister of Interior and Defence, handling Singapore's military and security policies. He also contributed to the reform of Singapore's education system through the 1979 'Goh Report' that introduced streaming. He retired in 1984.

J. B. Jeyaretnam (1926–2008)

Joseph Benjamin Jeyaretnam, the former leader of the Workers' Party (WP) from 1971 to 2001, epitomised the ability of the Opposition to succeed against all odds against the pre-dominant one-party dominant state of Singapore. In the 1981 Anson by-election, he defeated the PAP candidate, Pang Kim Hin, to become the first member of an Opposition party to get elected to the Singapore Parliament, thus ending the PAP's complete domination of Parliament since 1968. He was re-elected in the 1984 General Elections but lost his seat in 1986 for being convicted of falsifying his party's accounts. His conviction was quashed by the Privy Council. Following the 1997 General Elections, he returned to Parliament as a Non-Constituency Member of Parliament

(NCMP) but was stripped of his parliamentary seat for being declared a bankrupt in 2001. He left the WP in 2001 and in 2008 founded the Reform Party (RP).

Lee Hsien Loong (1952-present)

Lee Hsien Loong, the current Prime Minister, was educated in Cambridge and Harvard, and is the eldest son of Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first Prime Minister. He was groomed for political office for a long time and at the age of 32 entered politics by winning a parliamentary seat in the 1984 General Elections. Two years later, he was elected into the PAP's Central Executive Committee (CEC) and in 1990 became one of two Deputy Prime Ministers. In 1992, he was diagnosed with cancer. In 2004, he became Singapore's third Prime Minister and led the party to victory in the 2006, 2011, and 2015 General Elections.

Lee Kuan Yew (1923–2015)

By any measure, Lee Kuan Yew is the 'father' of modern Singapore. A lawyer by training, he and his close comrades-in-arms founded the PAP in November 1954. He held the position of PAP Secretary-General from November 1954 to November 1992 except for a short interim in 1957. Lee entered politics as an assemblyman in April 1955 and served as a parliamentarian till his death in March 2015, making him one of the longest serving parliamentarians in a functioning democracy. He was Singapore's Prime Minister from 1959 to 1990, and saw Singapore through as a British colony, a state in Malaysia and as an independent nation. In November 1990, he became a Senior Minister in the cabinet of Goh Chok Tong. In 2004, he was appointed as Minister Mentor in the cabinet of Lee Hsien Loong. Following the 2011 General Elections, even though he won a parliamentary seat, he refused to take up any cabinet position, opting to be a backbencher. Lee Kuan Yew led his party to eight electoral victories from 1959 to 1988 and his *imprimatur* can be seen in almost every aspect of national politics in Singapore right to this day.

Lim Chin Siong (1933–1996)

Often regarded as the primary nemesis of Lee Kuan Yew, Lim Chin Siong was the co-founder of the PAP in 1954. Later in 1961, he was the key architect in the formation of the *Barisan Sosialis* (BS), which was made up of breakaway core members of the PAP's left-wing. A Chinese-educated union leader, believed to be the 'open' united front leader of the Malayan Communist Party, he was elected into the Legislative Assembly at the age of 22 in 1955. He was the key instigator of many violent riots and strikes in Singapore in the 1950s including the infamous 1955 Hock Lee Bus Riots. He was detained, first by the Lim Yew Hock government from 1956–1959 and

later by the Lee government from 1963–1969. Till today, he remains a controversial figure in Singapore politics.

Lim Yew Hock (1914–1984)

Lim Yew Hock was Singapore's second Chief Minister from 1956 to 1959. Lim, then Minister for Labour and Welfare, replaced David Marshall and headed a new coalition government. As Chief Minister, he took firm actions to suppress anti-colonial activists and communists. From 1956 to 1958, Lim led an all-party delegation to negotiate with the British in a series of *Merdeka talks*, and won Singapore internal self-rule. Lim's hardline approach towards communism alienated a large portion of the Chinese-speaking electorate from him and his Labour Party, which enabled the PAP to win the 1959 General Elections.

Low Thia Khian (1956–present)

Today, he is the *de facto* leader of the Opposition in Parliament. He is also the longest-serving Opposition member in Parliament today, having been first elected to his seat in Hougang in 1991. He participated in seven elections and won on six occasions. A very charismatic leader, he is seen as the key to the WP's parliamentary success and the person behind the Opposition's ability to dent the PAP's electoral dominance. After defending his Hougang seat in four general elections, he led the WP team that defeated the PAP in Aljunied GRC in the 2011 and 2015 General Elections. He has been the WP's Secretary-General since 2001. In May 2016, his leadership of the party was challenged for the first time by Chen Show Mao, a fellow member of Aljunied GRC. Low successfully defended his position but this also indicated that there may be trouble ahead in the WP as far as internal unity is concerned, something that has characterised all Opposition parties in Singapore.

Othman Wok (1924–present)

In 1954, amidst rampant communist threats and the fight for independence, Othman Wok joined the PAP. In the general elections nine years later, he managed to win a parliamentary seat as a representative of Pasir Panjang. He subsequently assumed the responsibilities of Minister of Social Affairs, a post he held for the next 14 years. Othman is remembered for his handling of the racial riots that struck Singapore in 1964 on the birthday of Prophet Mohammad and up until today, he continues to fervently promote the need for racial harmony. He was Singapore's Ambassador to Indonesia for three years (1978–1981), after which he served on the Singapore Tourism Board and Sentosa Development Board for another couple of years. Old age and ill-health have kept him away from public life even though he remains a highly respected political figure in Singapore. He also prides himself as being from the 'Orang Laut' community, the original inhabitants of Singapore.

S. R. Nathan (1924–2016)

Mr S. R. Nathan began his career as a civil servant and went on to become an eminent politician. He was Singapore's sixth president from 1999 to 2011, the longest-serving Head of State of Singapore to date. He served with distinction in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Home Affairs, and also became the Director of the Security Intelligence Department, Singapore's external intelligence agency, in the Ministry of Defence. In January 1974, when terrorists from the Japanese Red Army and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine threatened to bomb petroleum storage tanks on Pulau Bukom off Singapore's southern coast, known as the 'Laju Incident', Nathan volunteered to be held hostage to secure the civilians that were being held hostage. He was a highly popular figure, preferring to maintain a low profile. He died on 22 August 2016 and was given a state funeral.

S. Rajaratnam (1915–2006)

S. Rajaratnam was one of Singapore's pioneering political leaders. A founding member of the PAP, his political career was characterised by his fervent anti-colonial stance. In 1959, he resigned from journalism to campaign for the Legislative Assembly seat in Kampong Glam. In 1965, he became Singapore's first foreign minister. He is remembered for believing that Singapore's small size was not an impediment to making it an influential member internationally. On the domestic level, he is known for his emphasis on creating a harmonious and multiracial society, as indicated by his contribution to the Singapore pledge: "one united people, regardless of race, language or religion". The height of his political career was as a Deputy Prime Minister (1980–1985) and as the first Senior Minister in the Republic (1985–1988).

Teo Chee Hean (1954–present)

A President's Scholar, he served with distinction both academically and in the Singapore Armed Forces. After various senior staff appointments, he became Chief of the Republic of Singapore Navy in 1991 with a rank of Rear Admiral. In 1992, he entered politics as part of a GRC under the then Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong. Since then, he has held various senior ministerial portfolios, including being Acting Minister for the Environment, Minister of Education and various stints in the Ministry of Defence. Presently, he is a key minister in the cabinet of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. In addition to being the First Assistant Secretary-General of the PAP CEC, he is the Co-ordinating Minister for National Security and the Deputy Prime Minister.

Tharman Shanmugaratnam (1957–present)

Tharman Shanmugaratnam came to prominence from his association with the Monetary Authority of Singapore (MAS), where he eventually became Managing

Director. In 2001, he entered politics, becoming the Minister of State for Trade and Industry, and Education. Following the 2006 General Elections, he became the Minister of Education and the Second Minister of Finance. He joined the CEC of the PAP in 2002 and is currently the Second Assistant Secretary-General of the CEC. Presently, he is the Co-ordinating Minister for Economic and Social Policies and Deputy Prime Minister.

Toh Chin Chye (1921–2012)

Toh Chin Chye's political career began with his involvement in the Malayan Forum, with Malayan nationals such as future Prime Ministers Lee Kuan Yew and Tun Abdul Razak, to deliberate on the independence of Malaya. He was one of the founding members of the PAP and was its chairperson from its formation in 1954 to 1981. In the 1959 General Elections, Toh was elected as a PAP MP for Rochor. Thereafter, there was a contest between Lee and Singapore's only mayor, Ong Eng Guan for the premiership and it was Toh's vote that swung the fight in Lee's favour. Toh was Deputy Prime Minister from 1959 to 1968, Minister of Science and Technology from 1968 to 1975 and Minister of Health from 1975 to 1981. He stepped down from the cabinet and party leadership in 1981 but remained a critical voice in Parliament for two terms, often criticising government and party policies. He retired in 1988.

Singapore's Key Fourth Generation Political Leaders

Chan Chun Sing (1969-present)

Holder of the President and Singapore Armed Forces scholarships, Chan Chun Sing is currently a Minister in the Prime Minister's Office and the Secretary-General of the NTUC. He entered politics in the 2011 General Elections as part of the GRC team led by Lee Kuan Yew in Tanjong Pagar and entered Parliament through a walkover. He contested and won in the 2015 General Elections. Prior to this he was the Chief of Army from 2010 to 2011. He has held a number of ministerial positions including Acting Minister for Community Development, Youth and Sports; Minister of State, Ministry of Information, Communications and the Arts; Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Defence; Acting Minister, Ministry of Social and Family Development; and Second Minister for Defence.

Chee Hong Tat (1973-present)

Chee Hong Tat has been a civil servant most of his adult life until he was elected into Parliament in 2015. He was part of the winning team at the Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC. He was appointed as Minister of State for Health and Minister of State for Communications and Information. He was the Principal Private Secretary to Minister

Mentor Lee Kuan Yew from 2008 to 2011. Following this, Chee became the Chief Executive Officer at the Energy Market Authority and later, the Second Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

Heng Swee Keat (1961-present)

Heng Swee Keat is currently the Minister of Finance. He entered politics in the 2011 General Elections as a member of the Tampines GRC. He also won in the 2015 General Elections. Prior to entering politics, he served as the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and Managing Director of the Monetary Authority of Singapore from 2005 to 2011. He also served as the Principal Private Secretary to the then Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew in 1997. Following the 2011 General Elections, Heng was appointed as the Minister of Education. On 12 May 2016, Heng suffered a stroke during a cabinet meeting. By late August 2016, Heng had fully recovered and resumed his duties as an MP and Minister of Finance even though another minister was also appointed as the Second Finance Minister. Heng is also known for having chaired the 'Our Singapore Conversation' and SG50 Steering Committees.

Lawrence Wong (1972-present)

Currently, Lawrence Wong is the Minister for National Development and the Second Minister for Finance. He entered politics in the 2011 General Elections as part of the West Coast GRC. In the 2015 General Elections he anchored the PAP's team for the Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC. Previously, he has held appointments in the Ministry of Defence, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Communications and Information, and the Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth. Prior to entering politics, he had served as the Principal Private Secretary to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong from 2005 to 2008.

Ng Chee Meng (1968-present)

Ng Chee Meng is currently the Minister for Education (Schools) and Second Minister for Transport. He entered politics following the 2015 General Elections. Prior to entering politics he had served as the Chief of the Republic of Singapore Air Force and the Chief of Defence Force, Singapore Armed Forces.

Ong Ye Kung (1969-present)

Ong Ye Kung is currently the Minister for Education (Higher Education and Skills) and Second Minister for Defence. He entered politics in the 2015 General Elections, as a member of the Sembawang GRC. Prior to entering politics, he held an array of appointments at Keppel Corporation, NTUC and the Singapore Workforce Development Agency. He has also served as the Press Secretary to former Prime

Minister Lee Kuan Yew from 1997–2003 and Principal Private Secretary to Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (2003–2005). Prior to contesting the 2015 General Elections, he was part of the PAP's Aljunied GRC that lost to the WP in 2011. Ong's father was Ong Lian Teng, a BS's Member of the Legislative Assembly/MP from 1963 to 1966 for the Bukit Panjang Constituency.

Tan Chuan-Jin (1969-present)

Tan Chuan-Jin is currently the Minister of Social and Family Development. He entered politics in the 2011 General Elections as part of the Marine Parade GRC. He also won in the 2015 General Elections. Prior to entering politics, he served in the Singapore Armed Forces, holding the rank of a Brigadier General. He has also served as the Minister of State at the Ministry of Manpower, and Ministry of National Development. In May 2014, he became the Minister of Manpower.

Chronology of Key Political Developments

- 1819: Stamford Raffles of the East India Company, together with William Farquhar, establishes a trading post in Singapore after securing an agreement with Sultan Hussein of Johore and Temenggong Abdul Rahman. Farquhar becomes Singapore's first Resident.
- 1824: Singapore is ceded to the British by Sultan Hussein in exchange for payments and recognition as the legitimate ruler of the Johore Sultanate. British control over Singapore was internationally recognised under the Anglo-Dutch Treaty of 1824 where the Dutch withdrew all objections to British occupation of the territory.
- 1826: Together with Penang and Malacca, Singapore becomes part of the British Straits Settlements.
- 1830: Singapore is administered under the Presidency of Bengal in India.
- 1832: Singapore becomes the administrative centre of the Straits Settlements.
- 1867: Administration of the Straits Settlement is transferred from the Residency of Bengal to the British Colonial Office, thus becoming a Crown Colony.
- 1867: The Suez Canal is opened, linking Singapore directly with the industrial centres of the world, thereby increasing its trade.
- 1915: The Indian Mutiny breaks out with British Muslim *Sepoys* rising against the British, fearing that they will be sent to Turkey for war.
- 1922: Singapore becomes the main British naval base in East Asia.
- 1941: In December, Japanese planes begin bombing Singapore.
- 1942: In January, Malaya falls to the Japanese and the Causeway is blown up. Water supply from Johore to Singapore is cut and Lt. Adnan from the Malay Regiment puts up a brave fight. The British forces under Lt-Gen. Arthur E. Percival surrender to the Japanese and Singapore is renamed *Syonan-to*, Light of the South.

- 1945: Japan surrenders unconditionally after the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Allied forces return to Singapore and the administration of Singapore is taken over by the British Military Administration.
- 1946: After the Straits Settlements is dissolved, Singapore is administered as a separate crown colony.
- 1948: When the Malayan Communist Party launched an insurgency, the British declares a State of Emergency in Malaya and Singapore. In March, Singapore's first limited election is held for six seats in the Legislative Council with the Singapore Progressive Party winning three.
- 1950: The Maria Hertogh riots break out in December, killing 18 people.
- 1951: The second limited election for the Legislative Council is held with the number of seats increasing from six to nine.
- 1953: The British Government appoints the Rendel Commission to make recommendations on self-government in the colony.
- 1955: The first local government elections are held under the Rendel Constitution with 25 out of 32 members of the Legislative Assembly to be elected. David Saul Marshall becomes the Chief Minister of Singapore.
- 1956: David Marshall demands full self-government, failing which he resigns and Lim Yew Hock, his deputy, becomes the second Chief Minister of Singapore.
- 1957: While Malaya gains independence from the British, Lim Yew Hock succeeds in gaining full self-government from the British.
- 1959: Elections for the first fully elected Legislative Assembly were held in May with the People's Action Party winning 43 out of 51 seats. Lee Kuan Yew becomes Singapore's Prime Minister. Yusof bin Ishak becomes the Head of State (*Yang Dipertuan Negara*) and the National Anthem, *Majulah Singapura* is presented for the first time.
- 1961: Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaya's Prime Minister proposes merger between Malaya and the British territories of Singapore, Sabah, Sarawak and Brunei.
- 1962: Singapore holds a referendum on merger and the PAP's option is preferred.
- 1963: 'Operation Coldstore' is launched in February, arresting 107 left-wing leaders. Singapore merges with the Federation of Malaya and together with Sabah and Sarawak, to form the Federation of Malaysia. The PAP wins the state elections by defeating the *Barisan Sosialis* (BS) and United Malays National Organisation. Indonesia's launches *Konfrontasi* against Malaysia, including Singapore.
- 1964: Devan Nair wins the only PAP seat in the Malaysian federal elections, outraging UMNO. Two racial riots break out in Singapore in July and September.
- 1965: Indonesian saboteurs bomb 'MacDonald House' killing three people. Malaysia expels Singapore from the Federation of Malaysia and Singapore emerges as an independent state.

- 1966: With Suharto at the helm in Indonesia, *Konfrontasi* ends.
- 1967: The National Service Bill is passed, allowing for compulsory conscription of all males above 18 years. The first batch is conscripted in July.
- 1968: Britain decides to withdraw its troops from Singapore. The PAP wins all seats in the elections, which is boycotted by the BS.
- 1969: Racial riots break out in Malaysia and there is a minor spillover into Singapore.
- 1970: Yusof Ishak dies and Benjamin Sheares is made Singapore's second President.
- 1971: The last British forces leave Singapore.
- 1972: The PAP wins all seats in the elections.
- 1973: The Presidential Council for Minority Rights is established to safeguard minorities from being discriminated against.
- 1974: The 'Laju Incident' occurs when four international terrorists hijacked a ferry and threatens to blow up petroleum tanks at Pulau Bukom.
- 1976: The PAP wins all 69 seats in the elections.
- 1980: The PAP wins all 75 seats in the elections.
- 1981: Devan Nair becomes Singapore's third President. J. B. Jeyaretnam of the Workers' Party (WP) wins the Anson seat at a by-election, breaking the PAP's 16-year monopoly of Parliament.
- 1984: The PAP's record of complete victories in the general elections (1968, 1972, 1976 and 1980) comes to an end as the WP and the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) manage to win one seat each in Anson and Potong Pasir constituencies at the 1984 General Elections. The PAP won 77 out of the 79 seats in Parliament.
- 1988: Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs) are introduced and the PAP wins 80 out of 81 seats in the general elections. Chiam See Tong is the sole Opposition member in Parliament from Potong Pasir.
- 1990: Lee Kuan Yew steps down as Prime Minister and is succeeded by Goh Chok Tong. Lee Kuan Yew remains in cabinet as Senior Minister.
- 1991: The Constitution is amended to introduce the Elected Presidency (EP).
- 1993: Ong Teng Cheong, the former Deputy Prime Minister, becomes the first directly elected President of Singapore.
- 1998: The Asian financial crisis breaks out. Singapore's economy slips into recession for the first time since 1985 along with the other Asian economies.
- 1999: S. R. Nathan becomes the second directly elected President. He wins without contest.
- 2000: The Speaker's Corner is introduced at Hong Lim Park.
- 2001: In November, Goh Chok Tong announces that the 2001 General Elections will be his last as Singapore's Prime Minister. The PAP wins 82 out of 84 seats with 75.3% of the popular votes. In December, the government arrests 15 members of the *Jema'ah Islamiyah* that were planning to undertake acts of terrorism in the Republic.

- 2003: Outbreak of the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) virus in Singapore. Singapore signs free trade agreement with the United States of America, the first Asian state to do so.
- 2004: Goh Chok Tong steps down as the Prime Minister and is succeeded by Lee Hsien Loong, the eldest son of Lee Kuan Yew. Goh Chok Tong remains in the PAP cabinet as Senior Minister and Lee Kuan Yew is appointed to the newly created post of Minister Mentor.
- 2005: Despite objections from religious and social groups, and many Members of Parliament (MPs), the PAP government approves plan to build two integrated resorts in Singapore. S. R. Nathan begins his second term as an Elected President as he is the only eligible candidate to be nominated.
- 2006: Lee Hsien Loong contests his first general elections as Prime Minister. The PAP receives 66.6% of the popular vote, winning 82 of the 84 seats in Parliament. Low Thia Khiang and Chiam See Tong remain the two sole Opposition candidates, successfully holding on to their seats in Hougang and Potong Pasir respectively.
- 2007: In May, Singapore is given the right to host a leg of the Formula One 2008 World Championship. In November, Singapore hosts the 13th ASEAN Summit and the Third East Asian Summit.
- 2008: In February, the International Olympic Committee awards Singapore the right to host the inaugural 2010 Summer Youth Olympics. In May, the International Court of Justice awards *Pedra Branca* to Singapore and Middle Rocks to Malaysia, settling a 29-year territorial dispute between the two neighbours.
- 2009: In June, Singapore celebrates 50 years of self-governance, coinciding with 50 years of PAP rule in Singapore.
- 2010: In May, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Tun Razak announce the resolution of the dispute over the Malaysian Railway Station at Tanjong Pagar. In October, Madam Kwa Geok Choo, the wife of Lee Kuan Yew, dies at the age of 89.
- 2011: In May, the PAP wins the general elections with the Opposition making major inroads by winning a GRC at Aljunied. The PAP wins 81 seats with the Opposition capturing six. Two important ministers, George Yeo and Lim Hwee Hua, are defeated in the elections. In August, former Deputy Prime Minister Tony Tan wins the presidential election over Tan Cheng Bock, a former PAP MP, by a mere 0.34%.
- 2012: In February, WP's MP for Hougang, Yaw Shin Leong, is sacked by the party for ethical reasons. In the by-election held in May, the WP's candidate, Png Eng Huat, defeated the PAP's candidate, Desmond Choo.

- 2013: PAP MP Michael Palmer resigns from his parliamentary seat of Punggol East on ethical grounds in December 2012. In the January by-election, WP's Lee Li Lian wins the seat from the PAP's candidate, Koh Poh Koon. In December, Singapore experiences its first major riot in 44 years in 'Little India' following a death of an Indian foreign worker.
- 2014: In April, Singapore and Malaysia announce their intention to build a third link, dubbed the 'Friendship Bridge', to improve land transport between Singapore and the Malaysian mainland.
- 2015: In March, at the age of 91, Singapore founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew dies of illness. After seven days of state mourning, Singapore witnesses a massive funeral on 29 March with more than half a million people paying their respects at the Old Parliament Building and en route to his cremation at Mandai Crematorium. In the September General Elections, the PAP retained its massive majority in Parliament with the Opposition suffering a dent in its support even though the WP won six parliamentary seats.
- 2016: In March, PAP MP David Ong resigns from his parliamentary seat in Bukit Batok on ethical grounds. A by-election was held in May, where the PAP candidate Murali Pillai defeats Chee Soon Juan, the SDP candidate. This marks the first time since 1992 that the PAP wins a by-election. In August, Singapore's sixth President, S. R. Nathan passes away and is given a state funeral. Following the Prime Minister proposing changes to the EP to ensure minority representation, a Constitutional Commission is appointed to discuss the issue and in September, the White Paper on the EP is released. In November, the new Bill amending the Constitution is passed with the 2017 presidential election reserved for a candidate from the Malay community.
- 2017: In January, the PAP announced the co-option of four additional members for the party's 34th Central Executive Committee (CEC). These were Masagos Zulkifli, Ong Ye Kung, Sitoh Yih Pin and Murali Pillai. Ong became one of the three organising secretaries of the party alongside Chan Chun Sing and Gan Kim Yong. In February, the government announced that the EP's election would be held in September 2017, unlike in the past, when it was held in August. Chan also stated that if a minority candidate left a GRC, no by-election would be called.