

**'I will always stand for multiracialism, multiculturalism': Leong Mun Wai responds to Shanmugam calling his past comments racist**  
Progress Singapore Party NCMP Leong Mun Wai made his latest comments a day after he did not deny assertions by Law and Home Affairs Minister K Shanmugam in parliament stating that Mr Leong has a history of making racist comments.

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SINGAPORE: Progress Singapore Party's Non-Constituency Member of Parliament (NCMP) Leong Mun Wai said on Thursday (Feb 6) that he hoped ministers would not be quick to label Singaporeans as "racist" when they are clarifying a socio-economic issue "even if it touches upon race".

Mr Leong's latest comments came a day after Law and Home Affairs Minister K Shanmugam [called him out](#) in parliament, saying the NCMP does not place much value in Singapore's multiracial approach and has a [history of making racist comments](#).

"I am even more disappointed that it is Minister Shanmugam, who had spent the same six years with me in Raffles Institution, who has been making such allegations against me," Mr Leong wrote on Facebook.

"Although we were never close friends in school, through our many common friends in our cohort, he should have known me better."

He added that he will always stand for "multiracialism and multiculturalism and above all democracy and rule of law".

Wednesday's exchange in parliament took place after Mr Shanmugam responded to a question from Mr Leong about the government's efforts in reviewing the country's CMIO (Chinese-Malay-Indian-Others) framework, an administrative tool for the government to manage policies around race.

**In his Facebook post, Mr Leong said he had raised the question in view of comments made by Minister for Culture, Community and Youth Edwin Tong at a recent Institute of Policy Studies conference.**

**Mr Tong had said that the CMIO model should be constantly reviewed to reflect Singapore's increasingly complex multicultural landscape.**

Mr Leong said that he thought his question was reasonable.

"But I was caught unawares when Minister Shanmugam suddenly dredged up two old issues and used them to accuse me of racial discrimination."

He acknowledged that when he raised the Singapore-India Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) in parliament in 2021, there were some people who thought there might be a "racial undertone to it".

"This is unfortunate, but I have clarified many times that CECA was only raised as a potential economic issue," said Mr Leong.

He added that he has "brought up many such sensitive issues" in parliament, including the sentences given to the culprits - all of whom were originally from China - of the recent high-profile money laundering case.

Mr Leong reiterated that since he graduated from Raffles Institution, he has "lived almost continuously for two decades overseas and have cultivated friendships with many schoolmates, co-workers and even customers".

He said: "These friendships have helped me to develop a deep appreciation of multiracialism and multiculturalism and above all democracy and rule of law. I will always stand for these values and never against them."

Law and Home Affairs Minister K Shanmugam has called out Non-Constituency MP Leong Mun Wai in Parliament, accusing him of undermining Singapore's multiracial approach and making racist comments. Mr Shanmugam cited...see more

### **"VERY DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVES"**

Mr Shanmugam had probed Mr Leong in parliament on Wednesday on the rationale for his question. He said that Mr Leong holds "very different perspectives" from himself and Mr Tong on the CMIO framework and its implications, such as on the [Ethnic Integration Policy \(EIP\)](#) for housing.

Introduced in 1989, the EIP sets quotas for the number of flats owned by each racial group in an HDB block or neighbourhood to avoid concentrations of any ethnic group.

The minister said these different perspectives were clear, citing Mr Leong's past comments about Singaporeans being "condemned" to live in Housing and Development Board (HDB) flats.

According to the Housing Board's website, more than 80 per cent of Singapore's residents live in HDB flats.

"Mr Leong has also made comments in this House which are racist, and he has quite freely admitted to that too," said Mr Shanmugam on Wednesday.

Referring to the parliamentary hansard, Mr Shanmugam cited his exchange with Mr Leong in a September 2021 sitting, during which the topic of CECA was brought up.

He pointed out how Mr Leong's comments on CECA had troubled even his party members who, according to media reports, interpreted the comments as targeting the Indian community and having a racial undertone.

"If you look at his comments, the 80 per cent of Singaporeans who live in HDB flats are condemned, and if you combine that with his racist comments, Mr Leong may not put much value in our multiracial approach, he may not put value in our ethnic integration in our housing estates," said Mr Shanmugam on Wednesday.

As he closed the exchange, he noted that Mr Leong did not address his point on the use of the word “condemned” nor allegations of his past racist comments.

"I note that Mr Leong doesn't deny saying that 80 per cent of Singaporeans who live in HDB flats are condemned, and that his comments were racist," he said.

### **Exchange between Mr Shanmugam and Mr Leong in parliament**

**Mr K Shanmugam:** Sir, maybe, I think, picking up from what Mr Leong has said, I realised that the question arises from what Mr Edwin Tong has said. Perhaps we have very different perspectives from Mr Leong on CMIO and its implications, for example, on the Ethnic Integration Policy. And I think that those different perspectives are clear when, for example, you see some of the things that Mr Leong has said in the past. For example, on HDB living, if you look at Mr Leong's Facebook post of February 2023, and I quote, he says that Singaporeans are not condemned to living in HDB flats. Mr Leong has also made comments in this House which are racist, and he has quite freely admitted to that too.

So, if I can read out from the Hansard of 14th of September, 2021: I asked him, sir, I asked through you, does Mr Leong accept that his party's statements on CECA, having been interpreted by some of PSP members as being racist, may well be interpreted by Singaporeans as racist as well? And since there was no answer, I had to repeat the question. I asked him again: Some of Mr Leong's party members interpreted his statements as being racist, and I quote, one of the quotes is, you are targeting the Indian community, and it is totally with racial undertone. My question was, if his own party members can think like that, it is entirely possible for other Singaporeans to take a similar view. And I had to repeat it in a different way, and ask again, Mr Leong, it is commonsensical, is it not, that those PSP members will not be the only ones who think that your statements are racist? If they can think like that, your own party members, then other Singaporeans can reasonably think that your statements are racist too. It's a simple point, and Mr Leong was good enough to say there will be some people who will think that there is a racial undertone to his statements. Yes, and I will hand out these, sir.

But the point I will make arising from his question is this, so if you look at his comments, that 80 per cent of Singaporeans who live in HDB flats are condemned, and if you combine that with his racist comments, Mr Leong may not put much value in our multiracial approach. He may not put value in our ethnic integration, in our housing estates, but the EIP, for example, is a key plank of our policy to ensure that people live together, are integrated, and we put a lot of value in making sure our housing estates are well managed, because we care for Singaporeans, and the CMIO is a key plank of those policies. I hope that clarifies, sir. And if I can, with your leave, hand over just for the record, the copies and for Mr Leong to refresh his memory. One for yourself, sir, and one for Mr Leong.

**Mr Leong Mun Wai:** Mr Speaker, sir, I would like to put on record that PSP supports the EIP, the ethnic integration programme, the policy that we have for HDB flats. What we take issue with is that the EIP has caused economic disadvantages. There's an economic cost to the minorities. So we are looking, we have recommended in this Parliament that we should compensate the minorities for that economic cost they have incurred. So that's all we say. We are not against the EIP at all.

**Mr Shanmugam:** I note that Mr Leong doesn't deny saying that 80 per cent of Singaporeans who live in HDB flats are condemned, and that his comments were racist. Thank you, sir.

On Thursday, Mr Leong said that the PSP supports the EIP.

"But PSP also notes that the EIP may have caused economic disadvantages to minority communities which need to be addressed," he said.

"I was speaking to advance the concerns of minorities, and genuinely seeking to represent their interests as a parliamentarian and fellow Singaporean."

He also said that his previous Facebook comment on HDB flats was unrelated to the question he raised in parliament on Wednesday.

"I hope that ministers will not be quick to label Singaporeans as racist when we want to clarify a socio-economic issue even if it touches upon race," he added.

"This principle is particularly important because we have just passed the Maintenance of Racial Harmony Bill on Tuesday."