

4G leadership team ‘very cohesive, serious-minded’: Heng Swee Keat

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Given the growing complexity of governing Singapore, it is not enough to have good political leaders, but also those who can lead in the social and private sectors, said Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat on Monday (Jan 22).

His comments on leadership came during a dialogue at the Singapore Perspectives Conference 2018.

The session’s moderator Ms Debra Soon, who is the chief content officer of Mediacorp, pointedly asked Mr Heng: “How ready are you to lead the 4G (fourth-generation) leadership team?”

Amid laughter from the audience, Mr Heng sidestepped the question, responding that the fourth-generation leadership team is made up of “serious-minded people who are trying to do their best” and that they “are working together well”.

“And I really enjoy working with everyone on the team,” said Mr Heng who, with Minister in the Prime Minister’s Office Chan Chun Sing and Education Minister (Higher Education and Skills) Ong Ye Kung, is touted as one of the potential candidates to become the next Prime Minister. “It is a team that is very cohesive. We discuss issues every week across a whole range of subjects, from security to social care, healthcare to education (and) economy. So, it is a very serious-minded team.”

Noting that the fourth-generation leadership needs to “function cohesively” given the complexity of the country’s future landscape, Mr Heng stressed that good leadership should cut across all sectors, and is not only applicable to politics.

While Singaporeans believe in good political leadership, the same cannot be said of other countries where their leaders are “made fun of”, said Mr Heng. He added that the lack of respect for their leaders meant that the country could not progress together.

And the situation is further exacerbated by political contests, which could result in some governments shutting down as they could not reach a consensus, said Mr Heng in a veiled reference to the United States government shutdown which has continued for the third day amid disagreements over federal funding.

Ms Soon also asked Mr Heng about his health, following the stroke he suffered in May 2016 during a Cabinet meeting.

Mr Heng said he was grateful for the “first aid” by some of his Cabinet colleagues and thanked the medical teams at the National Neuroscience Institute and Tan Tock Seng Hospital.

His doctors were surprised as he had a “low risk” of stroke, he said.

But “low risk doesn’t mean no risk”, Mr Heng said. “I am very glad that I’m back to work and doing a lot of things as I used to do. Except that I take my exercise even more seriously now.”