

Singapore Mourns its Founding Father

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Singaporeans woke up yesterday morning to the news that Mr Lee Kuan Yew, Singapore's first prime minister, had died.

He was 91.

Mr Lee had been in Singapore General Hospital's intensive care unit since Feb 5.

In a statement issued yesterday, the Prime Minister's Office said: "Mr Lee passed away peacefully at the Singapore General Hospital at 3.18am."

In an emotional speech to the nation that was broadcast live from the Istana at 8am, PM Lee Hsien Loong paid tribute to the elder Mr Lee.

Mr Lee's body is resting at Sri Temasek in the Istana, the official residence of the prime minister, for a private family wake that ends this evening.

A gun carriage will carry Mr Lee's coffin from the Istana to Parliament House tomorrow. His body will lie in state at Parliament House, where the public can pay their respects between 10am and 8pm daily until Saturday.

Those who turned up at the private wake yesterday included President Tony Tan Keng Yam and his wife, Mrs Mary Tan, Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong and his wife, Madam Tan Choo Leng, Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean and his family, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam and his wife, Madam Jane Yumiko Ittogi, and former Chief Justice Yong Pung How.

Also seen at the private wake were Brunei's Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah and his wife, Pengiran Anak Hajah Saleha, and Hong Kong tycoon Li Ka Shing and his younger son, Richard.

Google Singapore (www.google.com.sg) also paid tribute to Mr Lee's life with a black ribbon just below the search bar.

Flags across the island will fly at half-mast until his funeral this Sunday.

At the start of the second term yesterday, all schools observed a minute's silence during the morning assembly.

Across the island, events were cancelled as people grieved at the passing of modern Singapore's founding father.

The inaugural travel fair, Travel Revolution 2015, scheduled for this weekend, will be postponed by a week as "a mark of respect", said its working committee.

CANCELLED

The Esplanade Co announced that scheduled non-ticketed performances will not take place at the Concourse and Outdoor Theatre during the National Mourning period as a mark of respect.

Ticketed performances will continue as scheduled until further notice. The centre's premises will remain accessible to the public during this period.

A press conference by Under Armour and Dragon Boat Team Singapore scheduled for tomorrow has been called off.

Events that had to go on, like the high-profile Asean-Myanmar conference in Yangon, opened on a sombre note with a minute's silence.

A steady stream of ambassadors, Singaporeans and others filed through the gates of Singapore's embassies and consulates across Asia to sign the condolence books for the late Mr Lee.

Former Foreign Minister George Yeo posted on Facebook: "Signing the condolence book in HK before returning to S'pore later in the week for funeral. Long line at the Singapore Consulate General."

Associate Professor Tan Ern Ser, a sociologist at the National University of Singapore, told The New Paper: "I think no one can deny his place in Singapore's history. His death has brought Singaporeans from all walks of life together."

"Mr Lee has moved into the realm of elder statesman, and therefore above politics, in our social memory."

Associate Professor Eugene Tan, a law professor at the Singapore Management University, said: "We have seen and will see in the next couple of days not only Singaporeans' expressions of grief and sadness, but also their celebration of Mr Lee's life in their own way, whether through art or penning their thoughts on the online tribute pages."

"We are seeing a side of Singapore that wasn't so evident."