

Response of the Singapore Government to New York Times

1. Mr Lee Hsien Yang's Motivation

- All of Mr Lee Hsien Yang's (LHY) assertions and accusations to your paper and others are meant to distract international attention from the fact that he and his wife, Mrs Lee Suet Fern (LSF), were both found by a Court of Three Judges, led by the Chief Justice himself, to have misled his father, Mr Lee Kuan Yew, in the execution of his last will and testament, and to have lied under oath.
- LSF was found guilty of misconduct as a lawyer, and suspended from practising law for 15 months. Following the court's judgement, both LHY and LSF were approached by the Police for interviews into their possible perjury. They fled the country, instead of clearing their name.
- The court found that LSF had "acted with complete disregard for the interests" of Mr Lee Kuan Yew, and had "blindly followed the directions of her husband, a significant beneficiary under the very will whose execution she helped to rush through".
- An earlier Disciplinary Tribunal, appointed by the Chief Justice to look into LSF's professional conduct, had also found that she and her husband had lied under oath. The couple, it said, had presented "an elaborate edifice of lies, both on oath ... and through their public and other statements".

2. LHY's claim that this "saga" has made him realise there are "fundamental problems in the way Singapore is governed and run"

- Again, this grandiose claim is meant to distract attention from the real issue: LHY and LSF were found by the court to have lied under oath and to have misled Mr Lee Kuan Yew in the execution of his last will and testament.
- The Singapore Government has never "maintained that it can function without any checks on its power," as you assert. On the contrary, the government is subject to laws enforced by an independent judiciary. It is answerable to an elected Parliament. And it is accountable to the people of Singapore through open elections, which have been held at regular intervals without fail since independence—a rarity in Southeast Asia. LHY himself considered contesting in the 2020 General Election, only to back off at the last minute.
- You quote LHY insisting that "the idea that one good man (his father) at the centre can control this (the country), and you just rely on his benevolence to ensure that everything is right, doesn't work." That he should dismiss his father's political legacy in terms obviously calculated to win applause among some in the West will be regarded by most Singaporeans as deeply offensive to and disrespectful of his father.

3. Ministerial Committee on 38 Oxley Road

- The Ministerial Committee on 38 Oxley Road did not inquire into Mr Lee Kuan Yew's last will, as LHY alleges. The Disciplinary Tribunal and the Court of Three Judges inquired into LSF's professional conduct in the execution of Mr Lee Kuan Yew's last will and found the couple to have acted improperly.
- Far from being "secret", the Ministerial Committee invited and received representations from all of Mr Lee Kuan Yew's children. It later published its findings.
- The Committee was set up to work out options for the future of 38 Oxley Road. In this context, it examined Mr Lee Kuan Yew's wishes on the house, and found that he was prepared to accept other options beside demolition, as he had indicated in his last will and on other occasions, including a letter to the Cabinet.¹
- Decisions on 38 Oxley Road were and continue to be made transparently, following due process. As Prime Minister, Mr Lee Hsien Loong (LHL) had recused himself from all discussions on the matter. He continues to do so now as Senior Minister. Neither he nor members of his family are consulted by any government agency on any decision pertaining to 38 Oxley Road.

4. Alleged "dynastic ambitions"

- LHY charges that LHL and his wife Ms Ho Ching wanted to use 38 Oxley Road to milk "Lee Kuan Yew's legacy for their own political purposes" and harboured dynastic ambitions for their son. These charges are baseless.
- LHL sold the house, which had been deeded to him in the will, to LHY in December 2015, donating all the proceeds of the sale to charity. He had earlier offered to transfer the house to his sister for \$1. He did all this voluntarily months before his siblings made public their conflict with their brother.
- LHL's son, Li Hongyi, has repeatedly stated he has no wish to enter politics. None of LHL's children has expressed any interest in entering politics. None has done anything to even vaguely suggest political interest.
- Revealingly, The Financial Times reported that LHY's and LSF's asylum applications in Britain had "successfully argued" that the Singapore government had persecuted "their

¹ Mr Lee Kuan Yew had said in his last will: "If our children are unable to demolish the House as a result of any changes in the laws, rules or regulations binding them, it is my wish that the House never be opened to others except my children, their families and descendants." Indeed, Mr Lee had considered architectural plans for the interior of the house to be thoroughly renovated; these plans appear to have been specifically prepared with conservation requirements in mind. In a letter to the Cabinet on 27 December 2011, he stated his view of what should be done if the house is preserved.

wing of the family to block any chance that their son, Li Shengwu, might enter politics in Singapore and one day rise to the position of prime minister.”²

- This has left many wondering if it isn't LHY himself who harbours “dynastic ambitions”.

5. LHY and “jealousy”

- You cite visitors to 38 Oxley Road noticing whose photographs were displayed prominently in the house -- the eldest son, LHL. You quote LHY saying his brother “was the apple of my mother’s eye, and she had ambitions for him.”
- He goes on to say: “But did it cross my mind or did it bother me? I don’t think I ever thought about it. I was never antagonistic with him, neither did I have any jealousy or envy of him.”
- Based on the full facts of what has transpired, your readers can judge what really prompted LHY to launch this extravagant vendetta against his brother. It has so consumed him that he has extended the vendetta into an international campaign against Singapore itself, as well as the legacy of his parents.
- While claiming to fulfil his father’s wish to demolish the house, he doesn’t hesitate to demolish all that his father had built in Singapore.
- LHY and LSF remain Singapore citizens, as does their son, Li Shengwu. They are and have always been free to return to Singapore.

² The Financial Times, “Son of Singapore founder Lee Kuan Yew granted UK asylum”, 22 October 2024: <https://www.ft.com/content/8a3562c9-0f8f-4451-b190-a52b487d25e3>.