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Lawrence Wong: Who is Singapore's incoming PM?

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Singapore's Minister of Finance and Deputy Prime Minister Lawrence Wong is set to take over as the new Prime Minister of the republic. - REUTERS PIC

KUALA LUMPUR: Singapore is set to enter a new era under the leadership of Lawrence Wong on Wednesday following Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's resignation after two decades in office.

Wong, 51, will be Singapore's fourth prime minister, succeeding Lee, 72, who has been in office since August 2004.

Lee, the eldest son of Singapore's founding father and first prime minister Lee Kuan Yew, announced in April that he would step down and hand over the premiership to his deputy, Wong.

The announcement came two years after Wong was elected the fourth generation leader in Singapore's 59-year history.

WHO IS LAWRENCE WONG?

Wong is Singapore's deputy prime minister and finance minister. He is a member of the ruling People's Action Party (PAP).

Before entering politics, he began his career as an economist at the Trade and Industry Ministry in 1997. He was posted to the Finance Ministry in 2002, then the Health Ministry in 2004.

He was Lee's principal private secretary from 2005 to 2008. In January 2009, he was appointed chief executive officer of the Energy Market Authority.

Wong attended Tanjong Katong Secondary School and Victoria Junior College.

He obtained a bachelor's degree in economics from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1994 and a master's degree in applied economics from the University of Michigan in 1995.

He also holds a master's degree in public administration from Harvard.

POLITICAL MILESTONES

In 2011, Wong entered politics when he was elected a member of parliament in West Coast GRC. He was then appointed defence minister and education minister.

He retained his seat in the 2015 and 2020 Singapore general elections. He went on to hold positions in several ministries, including national development minister and second finance minister.

He became the face of Singapore's Covid-19 response when he co-chaired the multi-ministry taskforce tackling the pandemic from 2020 to 2023.

In April 2022, Wong was appointed Singapore's fourth generation leader by cabinet ministers, succeeding then deputy prime minister Heng Swee Keat, who stepped down as PAP's fourth generation leader in 2021.

Before Wong was appointed the fourth generation leader, Lee had tasked former PAP chairman Khaw Boon Wan with establishing a consultation process between the cabinet's fourth generation ministers to gather views on a potential candidate.

Wong received overwhelming support during the consultation process, obtaining 15 out of 19 votes, surpassing his cabinet colleagues Ong Ye Kung and Chan Chun Sing.

In June 2022, Wong was appointed deputy prime minister in a cabinet reshuffle, further solidifying his position as Lee's successor.

LEADERSHIP TRANSFER

Wong appointed Gan Kim Yong as deputy prime minister in a minor cabinet reshuffle on Monday as he prepares to become the republic's fourth leader since its independence in 1965.

Gan, who is trade minister, will take over Wong's position as chair of the board of the Monetary Authority of Singapore.

Wong will retain the finance portfolio.

Several junior ministers were promoted and two parliamentary backbenchers were appointed to junior ministerial positions.

At a press conference, Wong said continuity and stability would be key considerations of his administration as PAP approached the end of the government's term ahead of the 2025 general election.