

# WHAT WE KNOW

## Reason for dispute

All three Lee siblings agree that their father wanted the house demolished. But Dr Lee Wei Ling and Mr Lee Hsien Yang believed that he wanted this with no compromise, while Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong believed that Mr Lee Kuan Yew was prepared to consider alternatives should the Government decide otherwise.

This difference in views may be a "possible factor" in sparking the dispute, said PM Lee.

## Lee Kuan Yew approved redevelopment plans

The late Mr Lee had signed off on plans to redevelop the house, in March 2012, and was prepared to consider alternatives to demolishing it should the Government decide otherwise.

This was after he told the family in August 2011 that he would leave the house to PM Lee.

Following this, PM Lee and his wife Ho Ching came up with a renovation proposal to change the inside of the house completely to preserve the privacy of his parents, but to keep the historic basement dining room. Mr Lee agreed and signed the authorisation for the development application. The whole family was kept informed.

## Details of the \$1 deal

PM Lee made the offer to transfer the house to Dr Lee for \$1 in May 2015 after he learned that his younger siblings were unhappy the house was left to him. In exchange, he wanted them to stop attacking him. But they would only agree if he undertook to push through the demolition of the house, and both sides reached an impasse.

This part is not so clear: PM Lee said his brother had wanted in on the \$1 deal offered to his sister. His sister, however, said she was the one who asked her younger brother to be part of the deal. In the end, however, the \$1 deal fell through.



## Sept 1 ultimatum

In August 2015, after PM Lee called for a general election, his two younger siblings issued an ultimatum for him to accept their terms for the transfer of the house by Sept 1, which was also Nomination Day.

PM Lee, who said he had become suspicious about circumstances surrounding the last will by this time, asked his siblings to clarify the matter.

"After that, for whatever reason, the Sept 1 deadline passed uneventfully," he said.

## House sold at market value

After the September 2015 election, PM Lee made a different offer: To sell the house to his brother at market value with no conditions attached except that both parties must donate half of the value to charity.

Mr Lee Hsien Yang accepted the deal. After selling the house, PM Lee donated a further half value of the house to charity, which means that, together, both brothers have donated 1.5 times the value of the house to charity.

Dr Lee has characterised this donation as a punishment, but PM Lee said he had insisted on it to ensure that the family was not seen as benefiting financially from the house.

Dr Lee said, though, that their late parents had paid for the property in full and they were of the view there was no need to donate any money from such transactions.



## Appointment of A-G

PM Lee had made known to Cabinet and President Tony Tan Keng Yam his relationship and dealings with lawyer Lucien Wong (left) when his name came up as a candidate to be Attorney-General.

He said he had endorsed Mr Wong for the post citing his personal experience with the top corporate lawyer. "Everyone involved in the appointment was fully aware that this was the basis on which I was recommending him."

He also said conflict of interest rules for lawyers applied to Mr Wong, who is now A-G. Mr Wong does not advise the Government on anything to do with the house and also will recuse himself from legal issues related to the matter if it crops up.



# Debate on 38, Oxley Road What we know, what is still unclear

Parliament sat for two days to debate the allegations of abuse of power against Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong made by his two younger siblings, Dr Lee Wei Ling and Mr Lee Hsien Yang. The accusations centred on their late father Lee Kuan Yew's house at 38, Oxley Road. All in, 36 ministers, MPs and Nominated MPs spoke. PM Lee gave a ministerial statement on Monday and a closing address yesterday, and also answered questions. **THAM YUEN-C** summarises what transpired, and the questions that remain unanswered.



## WHAT WE DON'T KNOW

### Who drafted the last will?

Several MPs like Ms Lee Bee Wah (Nee Soon GRC) and Mr Lim Biow Chuan (Mountbatten) wanted to know, but the mystery was not solved.

Mr Lee Hsien Yang had said it was lawyer Kwa Kim Li from Lee & Lee who prepared the late Mr Lee's seventh and last will but this was disputed by Ms Kwa herself. He later said that the last will was a reversion to the first will that was drafted by Ms Kwa. She had prepared the first six wills.

But PM Lee has pointed out that the last and first wills are not completely identical.

Mr Lee Hsien Yang has also denied that the last will was prepared by his wife Lee Suet Fern or her

law firm Stamford Law, now Morgan Lewis Stamford.

On June 15, PM Lee said his sister-in-law had said otherwise when the will was read to the family after Mr Lee's death. On April 12, 2015, he said, she had volunteered that the late Mr Lee had asked her to prepare the last will, but she did not want to get personally involved and so got lawyer Ng Joo Khin from Morgan Lewis Stamford to handle it.

### Will PM sue?

Worker's Party chief Low Thia Khiong said PM Lee should sue his siblings to put an end to the dispute, adding that there is no guarantee they will stop hurling accusations even after a debate in Parliament.

But PM Lee did not want to commit to it, saying he preferred not to bismirch their parents' names and drag out the matter in court.

But he did not rule out legal options, saying he might consider suing for defamation if it became necessary.

He also said that having a parliamentary debate now on the dispute does not preclude having a parliamentary Select Committee or Commission of Inquiry look into the matter in future if there are specific allegations and not just a broad charge of abuse of power.

## Why he did not sue

Although he would have sued "in any other imaginable circumstance", PM Lee has eschewed the legal route this time as suing his brother and sister in court would further besmirch their parents' names.

He said his overall approach to handling the matter was to manage it privately without escalating the temperature and forcing the issue of his legal rights.

"I adopted this approach because it involves family and I was hoping all along to work out an amicable resolution, even if it meant compromising some of my own interest."

## Deep rifts in the family

Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong has come to the conclusion that neither money nor the house are the real issues.

"The dispute over 38, Oxley Road is only a fig leaf for the deep cracks within the family, cracks which perhaps started decades ago," he said.

He added that from what he has heard of what Mr Lee Hsien Yang and his wife Lee Suet Fern have been freely telling others, "it is clear that their goal is to bring Lee Hsien Loong down as PM, regardless of the huge collateral damage suffered by the Government and Singaporeans".



## Deed of gift

Whether in his private or work capacity, PM Lee would have been entitled to receive a deed of gift made between the National Heritage Board (NHB) and his siblings for the gift of items from the late Mr Lee's estate, said National Development Minister Lawrence Wong.

He said PM Lee had been handed the document in his capacity as Prime Minister, because he had to be updated on a major exhibition on Singapore's founding fathers. But even if PM Lee had asked for the deed in his personal capacity, as a beneficiary of the late Mr Lee's estate, he would have been given the document.

This applies to other donors to the NHB as well, and not just PM Lee, added Mr Wong.

PM Lee said he confronted his siblings over the deed because the conditions they set were "wrong". "If I come across anyone doing something wrong, even family, especially family, it is my duty to set them right."



## Mr Lee Kuan Yew was not inflexible

The late Mr Lee may have had strong views, but was not averse to changing his mind when presented with robust arguments, said Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat who worked as his principle private secretary.

Mr Heng said Mr Lee had been willing to take into account the new evidence and alternative views presented by the Cabinet when they tried to persuade him in July 2011 that his house should not be demolished.

Another example was when Mr Lee shifted on the issue of bilingual education. He had initially believed that the benefits of early exposure to languages washed out as a child grows, but changed his mind after evaluating evidence over the years.

In 2011, he decided to set up a fund, with his own money, and brought in several other donors, to help boost bilingualism, said Mr Heng, who was Education Minister then.

PHOTOS: AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE, GOV.SG SCREENGRAB, STRAITS TIMES FILE PHOTOS

## Will the siblings ever reconcile?

PM Lee said that he hopes that one day the "passions will subside" and they can make up. "It will be a difficult and a long road. But I hope that one day, some rapprochement may be possible," he said.

He also said that he hoped, at the very least, that his "siblings will not visit their resentments and grievances with one generation onto the next generation" and "do not transmit their enmities and feuds to our children".

Dr Lee and Mr Lee Hsien Yang have not commented on reconciliation.