

her world WOMAN OF THE YEAR 09



LIM HWEE HUA (Mrs)

Minister in the Prime Minister's Office

Second Minister for Finance and Transport

Biodata

Age: 51

Marital Status: Married

No. of Children: 3

Her Achievements

- In April 2009, Mrs Lim Hwee Hua made history when she was sworn in at the Istana as a Minister in the Prime Minister's office, thus becoming Singapore's first female minister. Mrs Lim is also the Second Minister in the Finance and Transport ministries.
- After eight years in the Education, Finance and Law ministries as an Administrative Officer, she joined the Swiss Bank Corporation as an investment analyst. In 1992, she moved on to investment bank Jardine Fleming where she served as head of research and director of business development. From 2000 to 2004, Mrs Lim was a managing director at Temasek Holdings, which owns and manages the Singapore Government's direct investments, with responsibilities in corporate stewardship and strategic relations.
- She became a Member of Parliament for Marine Parade GRC in 1996. In 2002, she became the first female Member of Parliament to be appointed Deputy Speaker of Parliament, a position she held till 2004. In 2004, Mrs Lim was appointed Minister of State for Finance and Transport. In 2008, she was promoted to Senior Minister of State for both ministries.
- Currently, Mrs Lim has responsibilities in the Finance and Transport ministries. In the Transport Ministry, Mrs Lim oversees the aviation and maritime industries. She is the Singapore chairman of the Singapore-Zhejiang Economic and Trade Council and sat on the recently-concluded Economic Strategies Committee to identify fresh ways to grow the economy.
- In terms of her grassroots work, Mrs Lim has been the MP for the Serangoon division of Aljunied GRC since 2006. Mrs Lim is also chair of the PAP Women's Wing. To develop female

leaders in the private and public sectors, she launched the Young Women's Leadership Connection (YWLC) with Swiss bank UBS last year to establish a pipeline of young leaders.

Education

- **1989:** Obtained a Master of Business Administration, majoring in Finance, from the Anderson School of Management, University of California, Los Angeles
- **1981:** An Overseas Merit Scholar, Mrs Lim graduated with a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in Mathematics/Engineering from the University of Cambridge

Community Contribution

- To develop female leaders in the private and public sectors, she launched the Young Women's Leadership Connection (YWLC) with Swiss bank UBS last year. An essential part of the programme is community involvement. So besides sterling grades and leadership qualities, the women were selected based on how they would like to contribute to the community. "I didn't want a network that only focused on careers," explains Mrs Lim. "Community work must be one aspect of it." Personally, she has been mentoring four young women via the YWLC since March last year.

Extras/Quotes

- "Men will always step up even if they're not the most competent for the post. Women tend to do a lot more self-examination. In her hesitation, her superior might form the conclusion that she is not as interested, and it becomes a missed opportunity for her." Mrs Lim used to have that self-check, "but I've learnt to never underestimate my own capabilities". She adds: "If I think I have a fair chance of making it good, I just go for it."
- On her appointment, she hopes it will inspire women to take up leadership roles and enter politics. She also hopes that people's expectations of her will be "no different from what my male colleagues face, and be based against the responsibilities we will handle".
- "My goal is to ensure that Singapore always has its place in the sun in terms of having a special position that we can sustain and always remain competitive at," she says.
- "Because I've seen the benefits of sharing which has always worked out better for everyone, I'm comfortable with sharing information, responsibilities and credit at the workplace," she says. "Furthermore, you can't be a leader if you're self-centred. You'll lose the faith of those you seek to lead."
- On managing a family-work balance, she juggles her multiple roles at work and at home by being prepared for "trade-offs". These include finding a balance between her need for privacy and that of living with her in-laws because of the "very solid and reliable childcare" they provide as loving grandparents.
- Another trade-off she made was when her husband decided to do his MBA at the University of California, Los Angeles in 1987. Instead of powering on in her career at the Administrative Service, she took a two-year hiatus to follow him to the US and look after their two young children.
- Despite her hectic schedule, Mrs Lim makes it a point to have dinner with her family as often as possible – even if this means nipping home before she attends an event later at night.

- She is passionate about theatre. “I grew up watching a lot of Teochew opera with my family, that’s why I have a huge interest in the arts,” she says. Whenever possible, she also catches local musicals. She even had a hand in writing the song lyrics in *Bugis Street – The Musical*, a \$1 million production created by her husband in 1994.

What Others Say

- Chief Operating Officer of UBS Singapore Teo Lay-Sie says: “Mrs Lim’s passion and commitment to create a pipeline of female leaders in Singapore comes through very strongly. She is keen to ensure that women with potential are provided the opportunities and support to take on leadership roles, balance family and work, and contribute to society.”
- Dr Ong Siew Hwa, an adjunct assistant professor at the National University of Singapore who works closely with Mrs Lim on the YWLC, says: “Mrs Lim epitomises leadership. She sets high standards for the quality of our work while providing guidance to keep us focused on the main objective of the projects. She is always composed and makes people around her feel at ease. We need more leaders like her. ”
- “Another glass ceiling is broken!” Says Member of Parliament Penny Low who calls Mrs Lim’s appointment “a big leap for women in the public sphere”. She adds: “Hopefully this leap can be translated into encouraging more females to step forward to serve the country.”

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF TRAVEL AGENTS SINGAPORE (NATAS) SINGAPORE WOMEN'S EVEREST TEAM

Biodata (Clockwise from top left)

ESTHER TAN, 27

Copywriter, Ogilvy

LEE LI HUI, 28,

Financial Consultant

LEE PEH GEE, 32,

Major, Singapore Army

SIM YI HUI, 27,

Experiential Education Officer, Raffles Junior College

JANE LEE, 25,

Business Owner

JOANNE SOO, 39,

Business Owner, Ace Adventure

Marital status: All are single.

Their Achievements

- The NATAS Singapore Women's Everest Team – comprising six young women – is a glowing testimony that achieving your dreams is possible, no matter how big they may be.
- In May 2009, five of the six members from Singapore's first all-women mountaineering team successfully reached the summit of Mount Everest, the world's highest mountain at 8,848m.

Yi Hui had to give up due to recurring chest pains.

- The women kept supporters and members of the public updated of their progress during the 10-week long expedition to Mount Everest on their official website, www.womenoneverest.com.
- It was in 2004 that team leader Jane and co-leader Yi Hui, both of whom were undergraduates at the National University of Singapore, started a recruitment drive to form Singapore's first all-female mountaineering team.
- Thirty people responded. After a series of interviews and physical tests, the figure was down to 19. Eventually, only six stayed on.
- Coming from diverse backgrounds and experiences, the team was forged by a common aim – to challenge personal assumptions and self-imposed boundaries.
- Their attitudes and aspirations have allowed them to succeed in an adventure that requires a combination of physical endurance, mental resilience and technical prowess.
- They had to overcome the big challenge of raising the half-a-million dollars required for the climb. Thankfully, the National Association of Travel Agents took up the title sponsorship of the team last year.
- Since returning from Mount Everest, the team has given 40 talks, mainly to schools and corporate companies. The aim of these talks is for them to share their journey and through their passion, inspire Singaporeans to identify what their personal "Everest" is, and to reach for it.
- *Her World* published two stories on the team – a “behind-the-scenes” Feature story on their 10-week Everest expedition (August 2009) and under *Woman Now* (February 2008).

Experience

- None of these women are professional mountaineers. To prepare for Everest, the women conquered six peaks as a team from New Zealand to Tibet in the last five years, each time scaling a higher mountain. Cho Oyu was the last one before their Everest attempt at the end of the month.
- Rising above 8,201 metres, Cho Oyu, located on the Tibet-Nepal border, is known as the "death zone" and ranked the sixth highest mountain in the world.
- They also trained regularly for six days a week, running for hours, climbing stairs up to 30 storeys high with 2.5kg weights tied to each ankle and carrying a backpack weighing between 15kg and 18kg.
- They each had specific roles during the Everest expedition so that everything would be carried out efficiently. Jane led the team and liaised with US-based guiding company International Mountain Guides (the company which they climbed with) for all climbing matters and planned the team's climbing schedule. Yi Hui, the co-leader, handled all administrative and financial matters for the team. Peh Gee, the communications I/C, took

care of the team's satellite communications system. Esther, the media liaison, sent out media updates during the expedition. Li Hui, the food I/C, planned all meals for the team. Joanne, the logistics I/C, oversaw the transportation of the team's climbing gear.

Extras / Quotes

- By the team:
 - "We are not out to make a feminist statement. We already have five other Everest teams in Singapore, yet there is not a single woman climber in there. Hence we formed this team, hoping to provide a platform for women climbers." – Jane Lee
 - "Climbing is more than a sport, it straddles excitement and fear, gratitude and blithe, life and death." – Esther Tan.
- According to adventurestats.com, fewer than 10 women have successfully climbed Mount Everest in the last decade.