iPS Institute of Policy Studies

Tracking GE2015 and its Outcome

Like we did with the 2011 General Election, the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) is running a series of surveys to understand the outcome of the 11 September 2015 parliamentary election, which the ruling People's Action Party won with a popular vote share of 69.9%. Findings from the surveys will be presented at an IPS conference later in the year.

In the meantime, IPS Special Adviser Professor Tommy Koh and Senior Research Fellow Dr Gillian Koh, in two separate pieces, have offered their take on how the PAP got its strong mandate. Professor Tommy Koh pointed to 10 reasons for what he calls the PAP's "surprising and extraordinary victory". Dr Gillian Koh cited three main reasons: the government's leftward shift in policies; the SG50 and post-LKY setting; and the opposition's track record.

IPS researchers were busy during the hustings, actively contributing their analyses on political developments and party strategies to the media and The Angle, a special section of IPS Commons that contains the latest insights by IPS staff on current policy and political developments. Correspondingly, site traffic to IPS Commons more than doubled during the election period, with 13,806 visitors to the website between August 24 and September 12, compared to the prior three weeks.

Researchers from the IPS Arts, Culture and Media cluster contributed a series of pieces on new media use by both the electorate and the parties, and compared the goings-on online in this election with what happened in GE 2011. Senior Research Fellow Tan Tarn How (who leads the work of the Arts, Culture and Media cluster) wrote about the normalisation of political cyberspace since 2011, while Research Fellow Dr Carol Soon and Research Assistant Tng Ying Hui discussed the forces that have shaped people's consumption of online content. At the end of the campaign period, Mr Tan, Ms Tng and Research Assistant Andrew Yeo highlighted several initial observations of the online space in this election. They pointed to, among other things, anecdotal evidence suggesting that compared to 2011, more people were reading both mainstream and alternative websites, posting about the elections on Facebook and using the WhatsApp messaging system to talk politics. Their caveat was that this could only be confirmed by the cluster's post-election survey.

Researchers from the Politics and Governance cluster produced several summaries of weekly developments in the run-up to polling day, from the introduction of party candidates, to the issues that continued to be at the fore of the campaign and feature in the rallies. Dr Gillian Koh (who heads the IPS Politics and Governance cluster) wrote several pieces on a range of topics, including what voters should consider in assessing candidates, the Workers'

Party's strategy, and the rationale for releasing sample count results. The issue of class — in relation to the candidates and the electorate — was also addressed in two essays, one by Dr Johannis Aziz and the other by the Head of the IPS Social Lab, Associate Professor Tan Ern Ser.

A full list of IPS' GE2015 work on IPS Commons can be found here. Follow us on Twitter and Facebook to receive our latest updates.

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If you have comments or feedback, please email ips.enews@nus.edu.sg

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