SMU students launch guide to electoral process for young voters

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SINGAPORE: Past and present Singapore Management University (SMU) students have launched a book to help combat political apathy among students, many of whom will be first-time voters at the General Election on Sep 11.

The team that wrote and published 'A Guide to General Elections in Singapore' hopes that the 64-page book will be a useful introduction for young voters. Some 4,000 copies will be distributed at universities, polytechnics, junior colleges and secondary schools over the next few days.

At the launch on Monday (Aug 31), about 100 staff and students discussed the different strategies of the political parties.

Dr Gillian Koh, a senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, said: "Opposition parties sort of target themselves at the national level, they've got lots and lots of detailed plans to deal with the national issues. And then, in the hustings, the PAP (People's Action Party) goes local."

"I think there are a few points to that," she added. "Firstly, in between the elections, we hear the PAP all the time. They are the national governing party and they've talked till they are blue in the faces, from their point of view, on policies. And they think when it comes to the ballot box, people are just emotional ... and care about the local issues. So they feed it.

"Then they assign a few ministers to respond or rebut on the national policy issues because they have no doubt that when the hustings come along, the opposition parties will bring the national issues up."

The discussion also turned to the issues that are likely to dominate the hustings - among them, the Aljunied-Hougang-Punggol East Town Council saga.

"I think for a lot of people it's very complicated, they are just completely confused about it," said Assistant Professor Jack Lee from the SMU School of Law. "What is the nub of the objection to how the town council has been handled? I read (Workers' Party chairman Sylvia Lim's) very detailed response and I think it's good that the response was so detailed. But was it too detailed? I don't know. Did it serve to confuse everyone?" he asked