

SPP may contest Hong Kah GRC with Reform Party at next GE

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The Singapore People's Party's (SPP) Chiam See Tong made a surprise appearance at Hong Kah GRC on Saturday, to join the Reform Party on their walkabout.

And he said they may contest the next general elections (GE) there together.

Mr Chiam, along with members of the SPP and Reform Party were at Yew Tee constituency.

The ward is helmed by former Transport Minister Yeo Cheow Tong, who is due to retire from politics before the next elections.

Mr Chiam had announced plans to challenge the People's Action Party (PAP) in Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC in the next elections, and now may be eyeing Hong Kah GRC as well.

"The other partners feel that we're better at Hong Kah. So I've decided to come and have a look at myself. And I find that residents here are very receptive of the opposition," said Mr Chiam, Secretary-General of SPP.

Kenneth Jeyaretnam, Secretary-General of the Reform Party said: "No decision has been made yet as to where we'll field the joint teams, so Bishan-Toa Payoh is still in the mix and a possibility, but it gives us flexibility."

Mr Jeyaretnam said the decision to field the joint team will be taken when the electoral boundaries are announced.

It has been speculated that electoral boundaries may be redrawn to bring Choa Chu Kang Single Member Constituency into the fold. The MP for Choa Chu Kang is Manpower Minister Gan Kim Yong.

The Reform Party has been visiting Hong Kah at least twice a week to build up its support base.

Mr Chiam may boost the party's momentum but he said more must be done to work the ground in Hong Kah GRC.

It's a sentiment echoed by Gillian Koh, a political watcher from the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy.

"Mr Chiam is a well-known figure on his own. We'll have to see whether he's able to bring that political capital to Hong Kah. He will have to build up his reputation on the ground. And RP (Reform Party) is a new party, so it's going to have to build up its branding as well," said Koh.

Residents of Hong Kah have mixed views as to whether the opposition will find success.

Some cited Mr Chiam's age and poor health as reasons; others felt that the incumbent PAP is doing a good job.

MPs for Hong Kah GRC will not take the challenge lightly.

Zaqy Mohamad, MP for Hong Kah GRC said: "He's got his supporters, not just in Potong Pasir but also elsewhere. But having said that, I think we have our own strengths, and I think we've done a pretty good job over the last four, five years to win over support. And I think it's a good time to see whether it's been good work or not."

Negotiations are still on for the Reform Party to join the Singapore Democratic Alliance, and Mr Chiam said details will be finalised soon.

The Singapore Democratic Alliance is a coalition of three parties, one of which is the SPP. The other two are the Singapore Malay National Organisation (PKMS) and the Singapore Justice Party.