

## **Singapore opposition to copy PH tactics for next year's poll**

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WHILE Singapore's general election (GE) is scheduled early next year, the campaigning seems to have started with the opposition admitting to wanting to emulate the tactics that propel Pakatan Harapan (PH) to victory in Malaysia's 14th GE in 2018.

Not to be outdone, the ruling People's Action Party (PAP) has touted their confidence in the 'Singapore Together' movement as the new cornerstone of the country's future development and success, said media reports.

The New Paper (TNP) quoted Singaporeans First party (SingFirst) leader, Tan Jee Say as saying that the opposition is hoping that former PAP stalwart, Dr Tan Cheng Bock who's now leader of Progress Singapore Party (PSP) will split the PAP vote in next year's GE.

He described Dr Tan's role as 'just like how (Tun Dr) Mahathir (Mohamad) split the Malay vote in Malaysia.'

In the 2018 GE in Malaysia, Malay voters were split three ways among the Umno-led Barisan Nasional, PAS and the PH coalition led by Dr Mahathir.

"We hope Dr Tan will not split the opposition vote, and will just split the PAP vote, because... that is his value-add (for the opposition).

The opposition vote is already there, 30 to 40 per cent, with or without Dr Tan and PSP," said the SingFirst leader.

The Straits Times early this month broke the news that SingFirst, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), People's Power Party (PPP) and Reform Party (RP) were planning to form an alliance, reducing 11 opposition parties to eight.

For PPP leader, Goh Meng Seng, he admitted the need for them to have a common policy platform to have 'even a slight chance of having a good showing.'

"In 2011, we were very successful because the Housing Board asset enhancement (policy) became the key issue, and every party was saying the same thing and attacking the same policy," he said.

Dissatisfaction over high home prices was a big factor in PAP's loss of votes that year, which at 39.9 per cent was the highest vote share for the opposition in post-independence elections.

Meanwhile, Singapore's Deputy Prime Minister, Heng Swee Keat, believed that the Singapore Together movement will benefit Singaporeans immensely, said the TodayOnline.

“What we see forming is a new model of partnership, between Government and Singaporeans in owning, shaping and acting on our future,” said Mr Heng of a consultative movement first unveiled in the middle of last year which is still in its 'early days'."

Heng was speaking at the Singapore Perspectives 2020: Politics — a conference organised by the Institute of Policy Studies — attended by public servants, private sector leaders and civil society.

The 'Singapore Together' movement is conceived by the fourth-generation leaders of PAP to allow regular citizens to play a part in the policymaking process, said the portal.

When setting the context, Heng described the world as being in an era of 'anti-politics.'

People have become increasingly distrustful of their governments and public institutions at a time when societies are grappling with the effects of globalisation, income and wealth inequality, and rapid ageing.

He referred to his experience from the 2012 Our Singapore Conversation (OSC) exercise, which he led when saying that Singaporeans understood trade-offs and the need to make hard decisions for the collective good.

“In this process, government agencies are learning to develop and deliver policy solutions in a more collaborative manner. At the same time, Singaporeans too, are gaining a deeper appreciation of the challenges and trade-offs in making national policy.

"And collectively, we are learning to understand different viewpoints, to distinguish truth from falsehoods, and to find a way forward in the midst of diverse and often conflicting opinions," he said.

When asked whether the Budget, which will be announced on Feb 18, will be "an election budget", Heng said that it depends on the timing of the next GE which must be held before April 2021.