

Politics not everything, says Heng Swee Keat

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SINGAPORE: Greater political contest does not necessarily mean better policies, said Education Minister Heng Swee Keat, and a government that focuses only on politics can miss opportunities to bring Singapore forward.

Mr Heng made the comment in response to a question from former Aljunied MP and former Senior Minister of State Zainal Abidin Rasheed at a conference organised by the Institute of Policy Studies.

Mr Zainal had asked what blend of political contest or consensus Singapore will need to remain successful in the future.

He said: "You know what happened in Aljunied; as a politician I shouldn't say this but as a Singaporean I felt, so what if I lost, if Singapore won? But what do you say to that? Did Singapore win?"

Mr Heng answered: "We are likely to see a greater contest in any case. It is not a bad thing; it sharpens our ability to deliver better policies (and) do things better. Being able to take the country forward should not be matter of just a contest among political parties.

"I'm not saying that political contest has no place, I'm saying it has, but for us to think about governance very narrowly just in terms of political contest will be to miss a big opportunity for us to have a different model of governance, for us to think about how we can take the country forward."