

Political leaders who practise 'servant leadership' would be respected

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NO MATTER how political leaders are chosen, it is how sincerely they treat people that will determine if they have legitimacy, said businessman Ho Kwon Ping yesterday.

He said this in response to a question about what defined political legitimacy in Singapore.

At a dialogue after delivering his first lecture as part of the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS)-Nathan lecture series, Mr Ho said political leaders who truly practised "servant leadership" would be respected by people.

"Legitimacy is when people recognise that the leaders who are there... are doing it for the sake of the people they are supposed to lead... it is conferred upon leaders whom people see are truly acting in their best interest," he said.

During the dialogue, he was also asked about the possibility of a "super freak election".

The session's moderator, IPS director Janadas Devan, had asked if Mr Ho thought an opposition party could win one election and suddenly find itself the majority in Parliament, controlling as many as the 80 seats that the People's Action Party (PAP) had now.

In response, Mr Ho said such a scenario was unlikely. He added that he did not think any opposition party would want such a situation.

"I don't think the Workers' Party (WP) itself would like to have a situation where suddenly it has 80 seats in Parliament because it's probably going to be voted out in subsequent elections," he said.

Currently, the WP has seven elected MPs and two Non-Constituency MPs.

He quipped: "I don't know to what extent this super freak scenario is going to frighten Singaporeans to not vote for (the opposition)."

On whether the PAP would accept such an election result if it happened, or there would be an "unprecedented military takeover", he said he believed the PAP would honour the results. Noting that it "plays by the rules, although it may push it a little bit", he said: "They would recognise that losing one election and biding time to win again is quite easily achievable, but disallowing the democratic process from proceeding is going to destroy Singapore."

Asked how he thought the PAP would do in the next election, he said that it was hard to tell.

But there was a segment of Singaporeans for whom the desire for an alternative voice in Parliament is strong.

"I have not met anyone who voiced out that they hope to see a change in government, but I have met people who told me that no matter how much the Government has done, they will still vote opposition because they believe in entrenching an opposition (in Parliament)," he said.