

Singaporeans remain confused on role of President: IPS survey

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The Straits Times, 2 November 2011

Singaporeans still have a long way to go in understanding the official interpretation of the role of the Elected President, a new survey by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) has found.

Some 2,000 Singaporeans of voting age were read 11 statements designed to test their understanding of the constitutional role of the President - and scored just an average of 5.4 points out of 11.

Most of them recognised that the President represents Singapore abroad, is the head of state, and can block the Government's intention to spend national reserves.

But four out of five surveyed thought that the President is there to ensure the Government manages the economy wisely - an interpretation that does not fall within the President's official job scope.

Meanwhile, three in four thought that the President was free to speak publicly on national issues he deemed important, and two in three thought he ensures the Government does what it promised in the general election. These interpretations are also beyond the official boundaries of what the President is supposed to do.

'More political education is needed on the role of the elected President because we cannot have a debate if it's not an informed debate,' said IPS senior research fellow Gillian Koh, who was part of the research team for the survey.

'And the starting point of the informed debate is to at least understand what the official interpretation is to begin with, and then take it from there,' she added.

The IPS survey, which was conducted via telephone from Sept 20 to Oct 5, aimed to understand what shaped the decision-making process of voters on the Presidential Election on Aug 27.