

## Analysts weigh in on eligibility findings of the four presidential hopefuls

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With the Presidential Election shaping up to be a four-man race, the likelihood of the eventual winner in the Aug 27 election garnering less than 50 per cent of the vote cannot be ruled out.

But even if the scenario comes to pass, the legitimacy of Singapore's third Elected President should not be doubted, political analysts told Today.

Dr Gillian Koh, senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS), said: "We have to understand that this is our system, and it doesn't matter by how much the candidate wins. It is up to voters to pay attention to the campaigns, what the office is about, who's appropriate to run for office."

Analysts noted that the four presidential hopefuls — Dr Tan Cheng Bock, Mr Tan Jee Say, Mr Tan Kin Lian and Dr Tony Tan — can expect a tough fight on their hands, since this is the first time that the Presidential Election has attracted such a large pool of eligible candidates.

Singapore Management University law lecturer Eugene Tan believes that campaigning will be "intense", and it might end up a "two-horse race" in which Dr Tony Tan is one of the candidates. "Out of the (other) three, it will be the one who would be most able to match up to Dr Tony Tan," he added.

Former Nominated Member of Parliament Siew Kum Hong said that, during campaigning, Dr Tan Cheng Bock, Mr Tan Jee Say and Mr Tan Kin Lian are expected to focus on differentiating themselves from Dr Tony Tan, who is widely viewed as the establishment's preferred candidate.

"They will probably position themselves as independent candidates, in differentiating themselves from Tony Tan," Mr Siew said.

Even before campaigning has officially started, much of the Internet chatter has brought partisan politics into the picture.

Some analysts believe that during the hustings, each candidate may gravitate towards a particular position to appeal to different voter segments.

Mr Siew believes that there is a likelihood that Dr Tony Tan will attract the votes from those who had voted for the People's Action Party during the May General Election — and that the remaining votes will be split between the other three candidates,

But SMU's Assistant Professor Tan disagreed: "It would be in the interest of the non-Tony Tan camp to act collectively and not split the votes."

Ultimately, the President-elect would be one who can draw support from across partisan lines, he added. Still, he felt that at least one of the candidates could lose his S\$48,000 deposit by failing to garner one-eighth of the votes.

Analysts noted that with about two weeks to go before the Presidential Election, voters need to learn more about the Office in order to help them make an informed decision.

Former Nominated MP Zulkifli Baharuddin said: "Voters should be choosing a candidate who performs according to the duties of the Constitution and not someone who can change the duties of the President."