

SPECIAL EDITION
TODAY
we set you thinking
todayonline.com

MediaCorp Press Ltd
Caldecott Broadcast Centre,
Annex Building, Level 1,
Andrew Rd, Singapore 299939
Tel 6236 4888 | Fax 6534 4217
Circulation hotline 1800 698 6329
today@mediacorp.com.sg

Publisher Patrick Yong
Editor Walter Fernandez

Deputy Editor Quak Hiang Khai
Night Editor Richard J Valladares

Associate Editor Yvonne Lim
Editor-At-Large Conrad Raj
Digital Media Editor Edric Sng

News Editor Loh Chee Kong
Foreign Editor Trixia Carungcong
Sports Editor Razali Abdullah
Features Editor Phin Wong
Special Projects Editor Don Ong
Product Manager Joni Ng

SUN SETS ON OPPOSITION
VETERAN'S CAREER

■ PAGE 8

'Distinct shift' in political landscape, says PM Lee

LEONG WEE KEAT

weekeat@mediacorp.com.sg

SINGAPORE — This “watershed General Election” marks a “distinct shift” in Singapore’s political landscape, which Singaporeans at large — and not just the political parties — must adjust to, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong. Not only has social media had “a much bigger” impact compared to five years ago, many Singaporeans also desire more alternative voices in Parliament and want to see the People’s Action Party (PAP) adopt a different style and approach in keeping with the new generation, said Mr Lee at the party’s post-results press conference early this morning.

With all but five seats contested and one in five voters below the age of 30, the GE has “heightened their political consciousness and awareness”, he said. “The campaign over the last nine days has crystallised voters’ thoughts and attitudes, and resulted in today’s outcome.” He felt it was “good for Singapore to have

had a vigorous election”. “There has been a full airing of all views and aspirations. It has caused Singaporeans to think about their political choices and the future of our nation.”

He also commended all political parties for campaigning in a responsible manner while contesting on multi-racial platforms — a result of the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) system, he added.

Mr Lee, the PAP’s secretary-general, thanked Singaporeans for their “strong support” — the party garnered 60.1 per cent of the overall popular vote. While he was disappointed the PAP candidates did not win in Aljunied GRC and Hougang, Mr Lee was “very happy” Mr Sitoh Yih Pin had won in Opposition-held Potong Pasir on his third attempt.

Asked how foreign investors would see the election results, Mr Lee said it would depend on how “things play out” beyond the GE. “If things play out constructively, we are into a new phase. This is something which happens

as a society develops, evolves, matures.”

On the concerns that have been expressed by voters, the Prime Minister said: “We hear all your voices — whether it is expressed in person or over the Internet. The PAP will analyse the results of the election, learn from what has emerged in this General Election, put right what is wrong, improve what can be made better and also improve ourselves to serve Singaporeans better.

“And that means not only the Government working hard on its own ... but engaging Singaporeans in the more difficult decisions.”

When asked how the loss of Aljunied GRC would affect his plans for leadership renewal within the party — one of his key focuses for this GE, Mr Lee said Mr Ong Ye Kung, who had been tipped as a potential office holder, would continue his work in the labour movement. “At some point, we would be able to bring him in,” Mr Lee said.

The rest of the new candidates, who are

The PAP will analyse the results of the election, learn from what has emerged ... put right what is wrong, improve what can be made better and also improve ourselves to serve Singaporeans better.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong

now MP-elects, would “progressively” be involved in Government “sooner rather than later” so as to form the fourth generation of leadership by 2020, he added.

What about Mr Zainul Abidin Rasheed, whom Mr Lee had planned to name as Speaker of Parliament? Mr Lee said he had intended to do so only if Mr Zainul was re-elected. “Politically, it is not be possible for me to appoint him as Speaker. But we would like to use him in some capacity because he’s a very talented and versatile person,” Mr Lee said.

The Prime Minister was also asked if Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew’s previous comments on the Malay community had impacted the PAP’s votes. Mr Lee replied that the Government’s earlier-stated position and MM Lee’s clarification on the matter had put closure on the matter. He also believed that the Malay votes for the PAP were “strong”.

POINTS OF VIEW

DR GILLIAN KOH

Compared to the last Parliament, where 47 parliamentarians won their seats through election, there will now be 82 — so basically, the years of People’s Action Party (PAP) dominance through walkovers are over.

This election was designed to allow for a higher level of contest, and that’s exactly what happened with the Opposition rising to the occasion — refreshing their slates of candidates, playing clean and fair ...

There was a better contest in every way because of the higher quality of candidates, so it was not surprising the PAP’s share of the popular vote has come down.

The Workers’ Party made the breakthrough in securing a Group Representation Constituency, and I look forward to their role in rigorous constructive debates in Parliament. We also see the departure of Mr Chiam See Tong, who has represented the Opposition in Parliament for 27 years. He leaves a long legacy for Singapore’s political history and helped renew his party — the Singapore People’s Party — by attracting new blood in the form of Benjamin Pwee and Wilfred Leung. Mrs Lina Chiam, if she accepts the Non-Constituency Member of Parliament post, will give a lot of impetus for the party to keep together and focus on policy debates. ■

Dr Gillian Koh is senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies.

EUGENE K B TAN

The road ahead will depend on how the parties react to the voters’ verdict.

For example, the People’s Action Party will have to re-examine how it implements its policies.

I don’t think we will expect any fundamental change in the direction of those policies, but voters have expressed concern over how they are implemented.

For the Workers’ Party, the biggest winner, it’s really the question of how they build on this significant success and whether they can live up to the task of making debate in Parliament more constructive.

What is clear from this election is the importance of renewal. Parties that did well have made attempts to reach out to a variety of voters through a diverse and well-selected slate of candidates.

What we also see is the maturing of the Singapore electorate which is more demanding of politicians — and parties and politician will have to measure up to. ■

Eugene K B Tan is assistant professor of law at the Singapore Management University School of Law.