

## **SDA needs a clear identity to succeed, say analysts**

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Opposition parties without a clear identity, such as the Singapore Democratic Alliance (SDA), will find it even harder to succeed in the wake of the Workers' Party victory in the Punggol East by-election, analysts said yesterday.

Mr Desmond Lim Bak Chuan, the SDA candidate, garnered 0.57 per cent of the vote, which was lower than the 4.45 per cent he received in the 2011 General Election. The 45-year-old lost his election deposit for the second straight time.

Once boasting four component parties, the SDA is now left with only two — the Singapore Malay National Organisation (PKMS) and the Singapore Justice Party.

Some observers also noted that the SDA, which once boasted Opposition veteran Chiam See Tong as its leader, now lacks a recognisable public face.

Mr Lim was also, at one time, regarded as a possible successor to Mr Chiam in Potong Pasir, until Mr Chiam announced in 2010 that his wife Lina would stand as a candidate in the ward.

Observers rated Mr Lim's performance in the Punggol East campaign as "poor".

"The stories about his paid 'volunteers' damaged his credibility, and the online 'rally videos' did not help at all," said Mr Siew Kum Hong, a former Nominated Member of Parliament.

Despite Mr Lim's efforts, for reasons of personality, style, a lack of resources and issues of unity within the coalition, the SDA man "failed to connect with the ground and will face a tremendous hurdle" to recoup the ground in the next General Election, said National University of Singapore Associate Professor Hussin Mutalib.

Institute of Policy Studies Senior Research Fellow Gillian Koh felt that the SDA "really needs to rebuild" itself. "(Mr) Desmond (Lim) really will have to rebuild it, because the way they are today is not viable. You have to set a direction, you have to attract talent," she added.

Others, such as Singapore Management University law lecturer Eugene K B Tan, felt that the SDA needed to move out of Punggol East, pick an area and focus on working the ground.

Mr Siew, however, felt that the SDA was "unlikely" to recover from its recent setbacks.

Asked if the party is at risk of being increasingly marginalised by voters, he said: "It is not 'at risk' of being marginalised. It has already been marginalised. In its current state, it will almost certainly lose in a multi-cornered fight, and it will almost certainly attract only hardcore anti-PAP voters in a straight fight."