

Workers' Party working towards becoming government: Pritam

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The Workers' Party (WP) is working towards forming the government, its first-term Member of Parliament Pritam Singh said yesterday.

However, he reiterated that the decision of which party forms the government "will be made by the people of Singapore".

Said Mr Singh: "There are 87 seats in Parliament. How many do we have right now? We've got six ... we will not be ready to form a government till we got 44 good candidates, who are elected by the people."

He added: "So, is that something we are working toward? Well, I think the short answer is yes. But at the end of the day, with respect to that decision, it will not be made by the Workers' Party, it will be made by the people of Singapore."

Mr Singh, who was speaking on a panel at the Institute of Policy Studies forum alongside National Solidarity Party secretary-general Hazel Poa and People's Action Party (PAP) first-term MP Vikram Nair, also mooted the possibility of a coalition government.

Said Mr Singh: "It may be a case in future whereby the PAP only wins 36 (seats) and we may have to form a coalition government. There is only a finite number of individual parties they want to work with. So it's not a case of either PAP government or Opposition government."

At another panel discussion, on whether there would be a "new normal" for Singapore politics here, political scientist Lam Peng Er said the 2011 General Election was "an evolution towards a normal democracy in Singapore".

Agreeing, Professor Chua Beng Huat felt the Government's investments in education and former Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew's retirement from the Cabinet would aid Singapore's move towards a more democratic political culture.

Dr Lam and Prof Chua noted the widening social inequality would be a "tricky challenge" and a political issue that the PAP will need to tackle in the coming years.

While he noted the PAP is tackling hot-button issues such as housing and ministerial salaries, Dr Lam wondered whether the ruling party will "re-examine its economic model of development" and be more open and transparent in policy-making.

Professor Kishore Mahbubani wondered if there was a "new abnormal" — the people's anger, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's apology during the hustings and the Government's "anxiety about the future".

Prof Chua was not surprised about the anger and cited the debate on ministerial salaries. "This was decided in 1990 and we are still angry with it," he added.

On the apology, Prof Chua felt it should have been seen as normal. "The reason why we think it is abnormal is because the first generation, particularly in that manner, would not

apologise for anything," he said. "From now on, it will happen a lot more because we are normalising."