

How different in 2030? Ministers say changes may be necessary, but should not be rushed

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AS FOUR Ministers fielded a slew of questions about the nation's future at a dialogue session organised by the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) on Friday, change was the hot topic.

Be it economy, foreign policy, socio-cultural or politics, the questions that emerged reflected one sentiment: How different will Singapore in 2030 be from what it is today?

With politics, for instance, what is the cost of continued single party domination to Singapore?

Said Mr Lim Swee Say, Minister in the Prime Minister's Office: "The question is not so much what is the cost of a single party but rather, what is the cost of a poor government or a bad government?"

Speaking as National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) chief, he added: "If that single party turns out to be the best government which we can have for the Singapore workers, so be it."

But not ruling out the possibility of change, Mr Lim said to applause: "But if this single party turns out to be a bad government, then obviously as NTUC chief, I will mobilise my workers to vote for a better government."

Responding to a question about succession planning within the People's Action Party (PAP), Dr Yaacob Ibrahim, Minister of Environment and Water Resources and also Minister in Charge of Muslim Affairs said: "Strategies have not changed ... we have to invite them to tea sessions, and sometimes we even have to cajole them."

While acknowledging that people could contribute to society other than joining political parties, he added: "There is no other solution at this point in time other than the fact that we should continue to invite good people to join and contribute."

A question was asked about the nature of the top-down role that the government here has played in stimulating the economy given the increasing complexity of our own economy and the growing unpredictability of global economic trends.

Taking this question on was Foreign Minister George Yeo, formerly Minister for Trade and Industry, described the Government's philosophy as "practical".

Allaying fears that the government are only concerned about big companies and not small ones, he told the gathering: "I don't think we are committed to whether the investments or the company should be big or small, so long as they generate wealth to the people and create employment opportunities."