

Nobody 'more pleased' than PAP if GRC system is no longer needed: Lawrence Wong

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SINGAPORE — The People's Action Party (PAP) government acknowledged that some believe the Group Representation Constituency (GRC) system is not necessary and that Singaporeans can be trusted to vote for the best candidates regardless of race, Finance Minister Lawrence Wong said on Friday (25 June).

“Believe me, nobody would be more pleased than the PAP leadership – past and present, from Lee Kuan Yew and S Rajaratnam onwards – if one day we no longer needed the GRC system to ensure sufficient minority representation in Singapore,” said Wong, who was delivering a speech on “multiracialism and faultlines”.

Wong made a reference to the US – a polyglot society like Singapore – where the courts have intervened to ensure electoral districts with built-in majorities of African-Americans and Hispanics. He was speaking at a forum on race and racism in Singapore jointly organised by the Institute of Policy Studies and S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies.

Singapore no longer has constituencies with built-in majorities of Indians and Malays as it wanted racially integrated rather than segregated housing, said Wong. Instead, the GRC system is in place to ensure at least a minimum number of minority legislators in Parliament.

“But we are not yet totally immune to the siren calls of exclusive racial and cultural identities. Neither have we reached a ‘post-racial’ state,” said Wong, who also spoke about several recent racist incidents in Singapore.

The country’s founding fathers had strived to ensure that they implemented policies to protect the minorities and prevent abuse by the majority, said Wong. Among such policies are the use of English as a neutral language for all races, electoral rules to guarantee minority representation in Parliament, and constitutional amendments to create a Presidential Council on Minority Rights, he added.