

S'poreans still value political stability: Analysts

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Singaporeans still value political stability and are not quite ready for a President who speaks up more and is an activist, said political analysts *Yahoo! Singapore* spoke to.

On early Sunday morning, Dr Tony Tan pipped Dr Tan Cheng Bock by slightly over 7,000 votes -- 0.34 per cent -- of total votes in a nationwide poll to become the seventh President of Singapore.

Both candidates were former members of the ruling People's Action Party. Together, the former deputy prime minister and former party backbencher respectively amassed nearly 1.5 million votes out of a possible 2.1 million cast.

Professor Eugene Tan, a lecturer at the Singapore Management University, said it showed that Singaporeans are still not ready to have a President that rocked the boat too much.

"Both Dr Tans were seen as candidates that could work with the Government. Both Dr Tans polled almost 70% of the popular vote. That suggests that the PAP branding for a candidate is not a liability as is widely perceived," he said.

On what were the key factors behind Dr Tan's win, he said, "Dr Tan's experience in public and private sectors and brand recognition from his years as a Cabinet Minister" and the fact that the non-Establishment vote was split between the other three candidates, Dr Tan Cheng Bock, Tan Jee Say and Tan Kin Lian.

Tan Jee Say, who said he intended to play the role of "auditor and gatekeeper" if he had won, came in with 25 per cent, or 529,732, of votes, while former NTUC chief Tan Kin Lian garnered less than 5 per cent of votes. The latter is set to lose his election deposit of S\$48,000.

"Mr Tan Kin Lian's very poor showing suggests that he will have to reconsider if he has political appeal while for Mr Tan Jee Say, the options are plentiful. He is likely to rejoin opposition politics... and we can expect him to run in the next PE in 2017," added Professor Tan.

Professor Tan also said that Dr Tan Cheng Bock's coming out of political retirement demonstrated that his political currency is still strong but age may not be on his side for the next PE as he will be 77 then.

Gillian Koh, a senior research fellow at the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, told *Channel NewsAsia* that there was "not enough strong support" for a president that should speak up more and to initiate discussion of policy issues.

However, another political analyst Dr Reuben Wong cautioned that while Tony Tan's "experience and expertise are valued by voters", he will need to "respond to the concerns of the 60-odd per cent that voted someone else."

Meanwhile, reaction from Singaporean netizens about the results was mixed.

Producer Ben Tan said that he's happy with the result.

"Among the candidates, Tony Tan appears to be the most political savvy although I think that the elections is a bit farcical considering that he or any candidate who wins will have less than 40 per cent of the popular vote," said the 27-year-old.

"I expect him to work closely with the government, ensuring that our past reserves are used only under extraordinary circumstances, and to champion the causes of nation building and integration," Tan added.

26-year-old student Lee Quanta also agreed that Dr Tony Tan deserved to win because "he has been contributing to the nation and you can't deny that he has helped the nation before and is approachable on at international level."

He expects Dr Tan to "uphold the nation and bring changes to the nation and not just be the President for the sake of being one. Be sure to know his stand and what he can do to help the people in the country."

Others online though were upset with the results but still welcomed Dr Tony Tan as the seventh president of Singapore.

"It's indeed sad and unfortunate for Singapore that Dr Tan Cheng Bock did not become our next president. Put nation before politics," User *RD* commented.

30 something wrote on Yahoo! Singapore's Facebook wall, "The result basically reflects what kind of President Singaporeans want. Half of TCB (Tan Cheng Bock) + Half of TT (Tony Tan). The winner, Tony Tan will have to work towards what TCB portrayed in order to win hearts of voters."

"Regardless of who we voted for, we should stand behind our new President to give him the support he needs to best progress our country," said *Sky*.

However, a legal secretary who only wanted to be known as Tham, 37, said she is unhappy with the results.

"I want a President that is outspoken and not a puppet" and cited that Tan Jee Say would have been the best choice for President "because he has a humble background and he understands the life led by commoners".

2.27 million Singaporeans were eligible to vote in this year's Presidential Election, the first Presidential Election in 18 years. Total votes received were 2,153,014, inclusive of the 37,826 rejected votes.

President-elect Tony Tan will be sworn in this Thursday, 1 September. He will replace outgoing SR Nathan and will be Singapore's seventh President.