

THE STRAITS TIMES

Singapore's Jubilee Election:

What were voters really saying?



Foreword

Sumiko Tan
Deputy Editor

On Sept 6, an e-mail giving bookies' odds on the Sept 11 polls made the rounds.

The opposition Workers' Party (WP) was said to most likely win not just Aljunied GRC, Hougang and Punggol East which it had held, but also Fengshan. There was also a chance it would win the People's Action Party-held East Coast GRC, and there would be close fights in Marine Parade, Marsiling-Yew Tee and Holland-Bukit Timah GRCs.

The list caused some excitement. While it was evident by Sept 6 that the WP rallies were exceedingly well-attended, most of us had not thought that Fengshan, East Coast GRC or Marine Parade GRC was under any real threat. Did the bookies know something we didn't?

Two days later, another e-mail surfaced giving detailed projected results of all 29 seats that were being contested.

The list predicted that the WP would win not only Aljunied GRC, Hougang and Punggol East but would also take Fengshan, Sengkang West and East Coast GRC. The Singapore People's Party would also take back Potong Pasir from the PAP.

The race for Marine Parade GRC would be tightly fought between the PAP and WP, with the former retaining it by just 54.2 per cent.

All in, 14 seats would fall to the opposition, double their number in the last Parliament. The PAP's winning vote share would range from the 54.2 per cent in Marine Parade GRC to 79.4 per cent in Ang Mo Kio GRC.

Radin Mas SMC : PAP-67.2% , RP-31.2% , Independent-1.6%
(PAP wins)
Bukit Batok SMC : PAP-62.9% , SDP-36.9% , Independent-0.2%
(PAP wins)
MacPherson SMC : PAP-59.3% , WP-39.6% , NSP-1.1%
(PAP wins)
Ang Mo Kio GRC : PAP-79.4% , RP-20.6% (PAP wins)
Aljunied GRC : WP-60.9% , PAP-39.1% (WP wins)
Sembawang GRC : PAP-58.4% , NSP-41.6% (PAP wins)
Bishan- Toa Payoh GRC : PAP-60.6% , SPP-39.4% (PAP wins)
Pasir Ris -Punggol GRC : PAP-77.4% , SDA-22.6% (PAP wins)
Hong Kah North SMC : PAP-61.3% , SPP-38.7% (PAP wins)
Bukit Panjang SMC : PAP-65.1% , SDP-34.9% (PAP wins)
Fengshan SMC : PAP-45.8% , WP-54.2% (WP wins)
Hougang SMC : WP-65.4% , PAP-34.6% (WP wins)
Mountbatten SMC : PAP-56.4% , SPP-43.6% (PAP wins)
Pioneer SMC : PAP-67.6% , NSP-32.4% (PAP wins)
Potong Pasir SMC : PAP-45.1% , SPP-54.9% (SPP wins)
Punggol East SMC : WP-66.9% , PAP-33.1% (WP wins)
Sengkang West SMC : PAP-45.8% , WP-54.2% (WP wins)
Yuhua SMC : PAP-63.9% , SDP-36.1% (PAP wins)
Jurong GRC : PAP-68.7% , SingFirst-31.3% (PAP wins)
Marine Parade GRC : PAP-54.2% , WP-45.8% (PAP wins)
Nee Soon GRC : PAP-60.3% , WP-39.7% (PAP wins)
Tampines GRC : PAP-74.4% , NSP-25.6% (PAP wins)
Tanjong Pagar GRC : PAP-61.2% , SingFirst-38.8% (PAP wins)
Chua Chu Kang GRC : PAP-71.8% , PPP-28.2% (PAP wins)
East Coast GRC : PAP-46.2% , WP-53.8% (WP wins)
Holland-Bukit Timah GRC : PAP-58.7% , SDP-41.3% (PAP wins)
West Coast GRC : PAP-68.6% , RP-31.4% (PAP wins)
Marsiling-Yew Tee GRC : PAP-70.2% , SDP-29.8% (PAP wins)
Jalan Besar GRC : PAP-58.1% , WP-41.9% (PAP wins)

By then, our attention was well and truly drawn to what might be another milestone GE. The WP had historically won a GRC in the 2011 election. Was it poised now to take not just one more but even two?

Later that day, though, other people started getting that list as well and it began taking on a life of its own, passed around on e-mail and WhatsApp. Our suspicions were aroused. Were the predictions a way to “focus minds” on a “freak” election

outcome should many seats fall to the opposition?

In any case, interviews we did with people in these “hot” seats did show that a sizeable number supported the opposition, or at least the idea of there being an opposition in Singapore.

The results on Sept 11 proved otherwise.

The WP, Singapore's main opposition, saw its presence in Parliament cut from seven to six and its share of popular vote dip in the two constituencies it held on to. None of the other seven opposition parties that had contested the election came

within sniffing distance of Parliament, including Dr Chee Soon Juan of the Singapore Democratic Party, who had marked his return to contesting the polls after a 15-year absence with speeches that attracted thousands.

Instead, the PAP triumphed, and triumphed big.

It won back the Punggol East ward from the WP which it had lost after its candidate, Speaker of Parliament Michael Palmer, stepped down following revelations of an affair. It narrowed its loss in WP-stronghold Hougang, and lost by a significantly



A People's Action Party poster of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong near The Marketplace at New Upper Changi Road on Sept 4, 2015. PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

smaller margin in Aljunied GRC. It saw a surge of support nationwide, with a 10 percentage point increase in national vote to 69.9 per cent. A total of 15 out of 29 constituencies saw voter support of over 70 per cent.

Singaporeans were shocked. The opposition was shocked. The PAP? The results exceeded expectations, said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the party secretary-general.

GE2015 will be talked about for some time. It raised intriguing questions like:

- How much opposition do Singaporeans want?
 - Was the 20 opposition MP limit set by the Workers' Party a brilliant tactical move that was both target (for opposition supporters) and cap (for those afraid the WP has aspirations to be the government), or a misstep?
 - If some of the opposition rallies were so well-attended, what happened at the polls?
 - Was the electorate telling the Workers' Party not to take voters for granted and not to fall into the trap of arrogance that the PAP has been accused of?
 - If GE2011 was marked by the lowest support ever shown to the PAP in its 50-year history (60.1 per cent), how did it manage such a swing in its favour this time round?
 - How much did Singapore's Jubilee Year celebrations and the passing of founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew have to do with the PAP's good showing?
 - How much were the PAP's efforts to be more responsive to Singaporeans a factor in its results?
 - And now that it has won so decisively at the GE, will the gentler, kinder face of the PAP last?
 - Was the outcome of the 2015 election in fact a freak result?
- Singapore's Jubilee Election: What Were Voters Really Saying? tries to answer these questions. It also captures the nine days

of campaigning in an election held at the 50th-year mark of a nation at the crossroads of looking back at its past, and looking ahead to the future. 



Recap the sound and fury of GE2015. (Available only on desktop and Apple devices)



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The Results



The PAP team for Marine Parade GRC (from left) Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, Mr Edwin Tong (hidden), Dr Fatimah Lateef, ESM Goh Chok Tong and Mr Seah Kian Peng reacting to the result. The team won 64.1 per cent of the votes cast in the GRC, beating their WP challengers by a comfortable margin. ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA



Workers' Party candidates Mr Chen Show Mao, Mr Pritam Singh, Ms Sylvia Lim and Mr Muhamad Faisal Abdul Manap at Hougang Stadium. ST PHOTO: DESMOND LIM



PAP supporters and candidates waiting for the official vote count at Bedok Stadium.

ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



Supporters of the Singapore People's Party at a coffee shop in Potong Pasir. SPP's Mrs Lina Chiam failed to wrest back the ward from PAP candidate Sitoh Yih Pin. ST PHOTO: YEO KAI WEN



The Singapore Democratic Party's Dr Chee Soon Juan (second from left) and his teammates at a press conference. The SDP failed to make any inroads in this election. PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



Full results at a glance



PARTY	LEADER	CONTESTED SEATS	SEATS WON	TOTAL VOTES	TOTAL % OF VOTES IN CONTESTED SEATS	+/- FROM 2011 %
PAP	Lee Hsien Loong	89	83	1,576,784	69.86	9.72 ↑
WP	Low Thia Kiang	28	6	281,697	39.75	6.83 ↓
SDP	Chee Soon Juan	11	0	84,770	31.23	5.53 ↓
NSP	Sebastian Teo	12	0	79,780	25.27	13.98 ↓
RP	Kenneth Jeyaretnam	11	0	59,432	20.6	11.18 ↓
SingFirst	Tan Jee Say	10	0	50,791	21.49	N/A
SPP	Lina Chiam	8	0	49,015	27.08	14.34 ↓
SDA	Desmond Lim Bak Chuan	6	0	46,508	27.11	2.95 ↓
PPP	Goh Meng Seng	4	0	25,460	23.11	N/A
IND	Han Hui Hui	1	0	2,629	10.04	N/A
IND	Samir Salim Neji	1	0	150	0.6	N/A
TOTAL			89	2,257,016		
Rejected votes				47,315		
Did not vote				158,595		



**TAP TO SEE FULLER GRAPHICS
AT ST GE2015 SITE**
(Internet connection required)



**Thank You
AMK GRC Residents**

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The Big Swing

What swayed the voters in the Sept 11 General Election?

Ong Hwee Hwee & May Chen

THE 2015 GENERAL ELECTION will go down in Singapore's electoral history as one that confounded expectations.

With all 89 seats contested for the first time since independence in 1965, pundits expected a tough fight for the ruling People's Action Party (PAP). Some even predicted that it would be in danger of losing more seats.

It didn't happen.

Many also expected the Workers' Party (WP) to build on its gains in the last election in 2011 and make further inroads.

That didn't happen either.

In fact, the reverse became a reality when the votes for the Sept 11 polls were counted.

The PAP won 69.9 per cent of the vote - a 9.8-point surge from 2011 - in a landslide victory that surprised even the party itself.

Not only did it keep its seats, it also won back Punggol East from the WP, and fared better in the two seats it lost.

The dust may have settled, but one question will continue to be debated by analysts and party strategists: What caused the big national vote swing towards the PAP?

What were Singaporeans really saying with their votes?

A VOTE FOR A CHANGED PAP

If GE2011 was a vote against a PAP perceived by some as arrogant, GE2015 was a vote for a transformed PAP which has shown itself to be more humble and willing to listen to feedback from the ground, say analysts.



**TAP TO WATCH
SINGAPOREANS HEAD
TO THE POLLS**

(Available only on desktop
and Apple devices)

In the last four years, its policies have also become more inclusive, such as spending more on welfare. Measures rolled out include the Pioneer Generation package and the Silver Support Scheme for the elderly.

Throughout the campaign, PAP leaders stressed that the party had changed from what it was in the earlier days.

At a rally on the final day of campaigning, Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam told the crowd: “We used to be a top-down government, quite heavy-handed. You know what I mean. It is no longer that way, because Singapore has changed, and we have changed.”

On the ground, PAP politicians also focused more on engaging residents in smaller groups, rather than mass events.

It was a change that even some in the opposition have noted.

WP candidate Daniel Goh wrote in a Facebook post: “For me, the meaning of the results is clear. It is a ringing endorsement of the PAP’s programme of going back to its centre-left roots and PM Lee’s leadership.”

NO HOT BUTTON ISSUES

Hot button issues such as the prices of flats were seen as a key factor in the PAP’s drop of vote share in 2011.

This time round, there wasn’t a single issue that stood out, even though new problems, such as train service disruptions, had surfaced.

Analysts say government policies implemented since 2011, such as the ramping up of flat supply, had taken the sting out of prickly issues.

Asked about whether the “heat level” of the hustings was lower than in the 2011 election, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said at a press conference that “cooler is better”.



A tribute film honouring Mr Lee Kuan Yew, who passed away in March 2015, being screened at the National Day Parade this year. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

FEEL-GOOD FACTOR IN JUBILEE YEAR

The feel-good factor from the recent Jubilee Year celebrations could also explain the swing towards PAP.

The death in March of Singapore's founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew also unleashed a wave of patriotic fervour.

These factors served to deepen the sense of solidarity among Singaporeans, and this worked in favour of the PAP, some observers say.

A VOTE FOR TRACK RECORD

PAP's track record - and the opposition's lack of it - was a message repeated by candidates during campaigning.

Speaking at the Fullerton rally, PM Lee told voters that they would find themselves in trouble if they bought insurance from companies without a track record.

Retiring PAP MP Ellen Lee said voters have seen the efforts that the PAP has put in in the last few years.

“The silent majority has realised that they cannot keep silent,” she said. “When they’re happy, they express it. This happiness is very loud and very clear. ”

PERSONAL POPULARITY OF PM

Analysts also see the personal popularity of PM Lee as a winning factor for the PAP.

He was central to the PAP’s campaign, with his campaign posters put up in different wards.

He told voters at a rally that by voting for a PAP candidate “you’re voting for me, you’re voting for my team, you’re voting for my programme and you’re voting for my promise”.

“FLIGHT TO SAFETY”

Some observers say the PAP likely benefited from a “flight to safety” among voters.

In the run-up to the election, social media had been abuzz about the opposition’s prospects of gaining more seats. Some even went as far as to suggest the possibility of a freak result.

National Development Minister Khaw Boon Wan, speaking to reporters ahead of Polling Day, also said there was no guarantee that the PAP would form the next government.

Political instability in neighbouring countries like Malaysia and Thailand - a point PAP leaders highlighted during the campaign - added to the “flight to safety” factor.

MESSAGE TO OPPOSITION TO DO BETTER

The opposition’s performance came under attack from PAP candidates during the hustings.



Workers' Party Aljunied GRC team, (from left) Low Thia Kiang, Sylvia Lim, Chen Show Mao, Pritam Singh and Faisal Manap thank residents of Kovan for their support a day after the GE2015 polls.

ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

PM Lee, at a press conference, said opposition supporters “voted for a tiger in the Chamber and you got a mouse in the House”.

Pointing out that the opposition was not working hard enough, he urged Singaporeans: “Vote PAP, make the opposition work harder,” he said.

AHPETC FACTOR

PAP had attacked the WP over its mismanagement of the Aljunied-Hougang-Punggol East Town Council.

The controversy might have planted doubts in voters' minds about the opposition's ability.

SUPPORT FROM YOUNG VOTERS

While some believe that young voters may be more inclined to work for the opposition, PAP's victory suggest otherwise.

Speaking at a press conference after the results were announced, PM Lee pointed out that PAP's victory could not have been done without strong support from the young.

He added that “it shows that the young people understand what is at stake, support what we are doing”.

A MATURING ELECTORATE

Some interpret the results as a sign of a maturing electorate which does not vote opposition for the sake of having an opposition in Parliament.

Commenting on the nationwide swing, PAP MP Liang Eng Hwa said: “This GE shows the high level maturity and wisdom of Singaporean voters, who are able to discern what are the



PAP East Coast GRC's Lim Swee Say gets a congratulatory handshake from a resident during a walkabout in Bedok. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

populist 'goodies' that are not sustainable and what are sound policies that strengthen Singapore's fundamentals."

Nominated MP Ben Tan pointed out that while Singaporeans are now more vocal, the results show that "voters are pragmatic and not as emotional as we thought they would be".



NEWS ANALYSIS

Silent majority's roar of support for PAP

Chua Mui Hoong

Opinion Editor

WHEN THE SILENT MAJORITY in Singapore speaks, it roars.

Voters gave the People's Action Party 69.86 per cent of valid votes cast, up from 60.14 per cent in 2011, a swing of 9.72 percentage points. The PAP secured 83 of 89 seats, up from 80 in 87 in the last Parliament.

The Sept 11, 2015 General Election was not meant to be a watershed one. Many people expected a status quo election, with the vote share and seats in Parliament hovering around the 2011 levels. Online, and among the intelligentsia, the opposition was expected to entrench its position. As Singaporeans First's party leader Tan Jee Say said candidly in a press conference at 1am, the swing back to the PAP went against all the feedback he had received.

Expected hot-seat contests fizzled out. Concern about pro-opposition first-time voters proved overblown. Instead, voters showed their disapproval of the Workers' Party, reducing its

vote share to 39.8 per cent from 46.6 per cent, and returning one of its wards, Punggol East, to the PAP.

The PAP's vote share was above 70 per cent in six out of 13 single-seat wards, and nine out of 16 group representation constituencies (GRCs). All over Singapore, as the results from sample counts started streaming in after 9pm, and as they were confirmed by actual vote counts past midnight, people asked: Why? What accounts for the large swing back to the PAP?

In the absence of hard data, it is impossible to offer solid answers. Instead, here's a first-cut analysis.

First, the straightforward answer: The vote swing reflects Singaporeans' backing of the PAP because it remains the party they consider best able to deliver a good government.

If so, then GE2011 was the equivalent of a hissy fit from voters unhappy over rising costs, infrastructure overloads and immigration. Now that the issues are being fixed, the electorate is prepared to return to the PAP's embrace. This is borne out by the uniformly strong showing across the country.

Second, the nationalistic factors. Singapore celebrated its Jubilee year just last month. The death in March of Singapore's founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew also unleashed a wave of patriotic fervour and reminded Singaporeans of the centrality of Mr Lee's party, the PAP, to Singapore's progress. A sense of solidarity this exceptional year might explain the swing.

Third, the personal popularity of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, who has been central to the PAP's campaign, with posters of his face everywhere. He urged voters repeatedly to back his team who will form the core of the next generation of leaders. Mr Lee led his Ang Mo Kio GRC team to the second-highest win among all constituencies at 78.6 per cent. Mr Lee



**TAP TO WATCH
TAKE 5 WITH ARNOLD:
LANDSLIDE WIN FOR PAP**

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thanked voters for the very strong result, and said he was humbled by it. "Tomorrow will be better than today. SG100 will be better than SG50," he said.

Fourth, the flight to safety thesis.

The last time the PAP won such high margins was in 2001, as an economic downturn loomed in the wake of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in the United States. Voters gave the PAP 75.3 per cent then.

In all the other elections from 1988 to 2011, the PAP got between 60.1 and 66.6 per cent. By the 1990s, many predicted that the days of the PAP winning 70 per cent and above were over for good, barring exceptional circumstances.

This election, the 2.3 million voters put the lie to that idea - but this was an exceptional year. They went to the 832 polling stations across the island amidst a haze that reached unhealthy PSI levels of 150 to 160, an atmospheric reminder of Singapore's position as a small city-state surrounded by larger unpredictable neighbours.

Yesterday was also the anniversary of the Sept 11 terrorist attacks in 2001.

Meanwhile, the past weeks' news has been full of China's stock market and currency gyrations, and a likely slowdown in China, Singapore's biggest export destination. Several banks have cut Singapore's full-year growth forecast as a result. As Singapore heads into an uncertain global economy, business-minded voters are likely to prefer a tested party.

Fifth, the parties' track record since GE2011. Both the PAP and WP had four years to woo voters.

The PAP pulled out all stops in a fast-paced programme of policy reform that tackled infrastructure shortages in transport and housing. It tightened the tap on foreign worker growth, and ramped up subsidies to the low- and middle-

income groups in the areas of healthcare, childcare, housing, and for the elderly.

As for the WP, it has managed to attract individual candidates with good academic credentials to stand for election - although none of the new candidates won seats.

But as a party, it failed to win the confidence of voters, with its opaque management of town council finances. Support slid even in WP strongholds Hougang (from 62.1 to 57.69 per cent) and Aljunied GRC (54.7 to 50.95 per cent).

But the WP held on to its position as the leading opposition party. Its 39.75 per cent vote share puts it ahead of the Singapore Democratic Party (31.23 per cent). Smaller parties got below 30 per cent, with the Reform Party getting 20.6 per cent in the wards it contested.

Sixth, the result might simply reflect a pushback from those who feel that Singapore needs a stronger PAP more than it needs a stronger opposition at this point.

Unlike in the United States or Britain, not many Singapore voters identify with particular political parties and many do not vote according to political party lines. Anecdotal stories suggest that many are conditional voters, switching their vote each election. Some may have voted PAP this time, for fear of too large a swing to an immature opposition.

If so, then the large swing should be read less as a vote of contentment with the PAP, or representing a diminished desire for elected opposition MPs in Parliament. Instead, it is more akin to a tactical retreat by opposition supporters, to back the PAP on its path of moderate reform, while spurring the fragmented and substandard opposition into doing better.

Perhaps voters took to heart what PM Lee urged: Vote for the PAP to make the opposition work harder. Even as it

celebrates a well-deserved victory, the PAP should beware of one thing: returning to its top-down, arrogant ways that caused it to lose support in GE2011.

As Singapore voters have shown over the decades, favour once given, can be withdrawn. 

NEWS ANALYSIS

A strong mandate for a changed PAP

Han Fook Kwang
Editor At Large

THE PEOPLE'S ACTION PARTY'S (PAP) impressive gains in this General Election (GE) stemmed from a hard-earned effort.

The last four years have not been easy and showed what it takes to pull off such a verdict from the people.

If the party had slackened and failed to deliver on some of the policy areas that it worked so hard on - immigration, public housing and transport - the swing in its favour might not have been so large.

And if its candidates had not worked as hard to recover the ground they lost in 2011, they wouldn't be savouring the victory they deserved last night.

But this is the PAP - arguably the most successful political party in the world - and it came up with enough aces after the shock loss of Aljunied in 2011.

It is not easy to build 100,000 Housing Board flats in three years, and in doing so, the ruling party showed the depth of its

strength in delivering quick results.

Ditto its policy initiatives in immigration, health insurance and healthcare for the pioneer generation.

What now for the future of the party?

Throughout the campaign, its leaders and particularly Deputy Prime Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam stressed that the PAP had changed from what it was in the earlier days.

Its politics had softened, its policies had become more inclusive, it now practises a less rigid form of meritocracy and it was spending more on welfare.

Voters rewarded the party for its willingness and capacity to make these changes.

Expect more to come as it tries to find a new balance between hard-headed policies to make the economy more competitive and doing more to help those unable to cope with the rough edges of raw capitalism.

But policy is the easier part of the challenge for the PAP.

The tougher area is in replenishing its ranks, and this GE gave a glimpse of what it takes to keep its renewal humming.

It had worried publicly that the more competitive politics today will shrink its talent pool because capable Singaporeans are discouraged from entering the fray.

Why risk a successful career in the public or private sector for the rough and tumble of partisan politics and with no assurance of success?

Indeed, for young Singaporeans interested in politics, the Workers' Party (WP) might be seen as a more exciting party to join - fresher and more daring.

The PAP responded by fielding more from the private and people sector than in previous elections.

The more rounded selection hasn't hurt its performance at the polls, an early indication perhaps that it is heading in the

right direction.

But, more important, the party will hope that its earlier fears over the shrinking talent pool would not come to pass.

If indeed this is the case, it will be a big boost for the party and keep its leadership ranks refreshed.

The strong mandate it has received should also put it in a more confident position to make the necessary changes to the party to meet the changing expectations of Singaporeans and win their trust.

This leads to the most critical question of all concerning renewal: Who will be its next leader?

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong led this campaign from the front, putting his leadership on the line, and he can justifiably claim a large part of the credit.

But for how long more can he do this?

At the moment, there is no clear successor and no one able to take charge, as he did, for the next election and beyond.

For the PAP, this is top priority over the next five years.

For the WP, this GE has consolidated its position, but only just.

Voters sent the party a very strong signal: Shape up or stay put.

It had slipped when it allowed its management of its town council to be attacked by the ruling party, casting doubts on its competence and more.

It knows it has to solve this problem in the next four years before the next GE.

Fail to do so and it might well be punished further.

The WP is adept at hitting the right emotional buttons to connect with those who dislike the PAP and do not want an overly dominant party.

But it has to do more to persuade others, who doubt its

competency and its ability to be a credible alternative. This means being more active in Parliament, and taking a clearer stand on the important issues of the day.

Expect it to work harder on this front.

To do this well, it has to continue attracting younger Singaporeans with ability and commitment to join its ranks.

It remains to be seen whether its failure to make further electoral gains will set it back in its recruitment drive.

If it does, it will be a major blow to the party.

The hope the WP offered to opposition supporters four years ago of challenging PAP rule is still very much alive.

But it has been tempered by the reality that it will not be smooth sailing and it has to fight ever harder to regain the momentum.

On the whole, this has been a good result for the country with the political transition taking place at a controlled and gradual pace.

There has been no sudden shock or dislocation to the system.

Singaporeans are a pragmatic and sophisticated lot and they know instinctively what serves the country's interest best.

They rewarded the party which best learnt its lessons from GE2011.

Of all the signals that this election result sent, this message from voters was the clearest yet. 

NEWS ANALYSIS

A stunning outcome, a moment to reflect

Vikram Khanna

Associate Editor, The Business Times

WAKE UP AND SMELL the landslide.

A lot of bookies would have lost a lot of money this morning. Singapore does not have pollsters but it does have a lot of self-styled political pundits, and this was not the result many of them predicted.

At a private lunch two days before voting, an eminent former Singapore politician, renowned for his political acuity, forecast that the People's Action Party (PAP) would see its share of the popular vote go down by 3 to 4 percentage points. As it turned out, neither the extent of the swing nor the direction was right.

Many of the predictions for individual constituencies went haywire. At the end of the campaign, after observing the often electrifying opposition rallies, the pundits predicted that the PAP would lose East Coast GRC (it didn't); that given the lightweight PAP team ranged against seasoned Workers' Party heavyweights, Aljunied would be no contest (it was - not

bad for a suicide squad, as one newsroom wag put it); that Holland-Bukit Timah and Fengshan would be too close to call (they were not) and that the opposition would win back Potong Pasir and retain Punggol East (it didn't). Voters have a way of surprising the experts. This is not unique to Singapore. Before the May 7 election in the UK, just about every pollster in the land predicted that a hung parliament was dead certain. In the event, the Conservatives won an absolute majority. Then, in India's elections last year, the polls suggested Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party and its allies would get a plurality of votes and would probably form a coalition. Nobody predicted a landslide victory.

A landslide is also what the PAP has won in Friday's election and it needs some explaining. People have mentioned the Lee Kuan Yew-sympathy-vote factor following his death, the feel-good SG50 impact and the Lee Hsien Loong-Tharman Shanmugaratnam wow effect. But this election result is surely about more than that.

There were essentially two competing narratives: The PAP's narrative was "vote for who can govern", while the opposition's narrative was "we need a bigger opposition as a check on power".

Maybe the opposition missed something that voters took on board: that the PAP had in fact listened to many of the grievances aired in the 2011 election, and acted on them. It has curbed the inflow of foreign workers, reined in soaring property prices, increased health subsidies and income support schemes to reduce inequalities and expanded the transport infrastructure. More needs to be done in many of these areas, but the work has begun. For many voters, that's good enough.

While the PAP has blunted the opposition's old agenda since

2011, that agenda has remained largely the same. And so, if the 2011 election prompted soul-searching within the PAP, this election should do that for the opposition. Rather than depicting the PAP as being rigid, uncaring and tunnel-visioned, maybe they need to acknowledge that it has in fact been responsive - and focus on how they, the opposition, can build on that.

Perhaps too, they should tone down their anti-foreigner rants; one of the striking features of the campaign was that whereas many opposition leaders blamed foreigners for just about every social problem - from jobs to property prices, to overcrowding - the PAP did not. It took the nuanced view that this is not a simple issue, but, as Singapore's business community knows very well, involves trade-offs.

And maybe, just maybe, the now age-old opposition narrative that "we don't want to form the government, we only want to be the opposition" doesn't work any more. If you want to be elected, you should, like opposition parties everywhere else, also be prepared to govern. 



Workers' Party leader Low Thia Kiang (at podium) and his team celebrating their victory in Aljunied GRC.
ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG

HOT SEAT: ALJUNIED GRC

WP squeaks through in Aljunied GRC

Aaron Low, Rachel Au-Yong & Pearl Lee

WHAT WAS SUPPOSED to be an easy win for the Workers' Party (WP) in Aljunied GRC in this general election turned out to be a knife-edge battle for survival.

The People's Action Party (PAP) team pushed the WP "A" team to the wire, as voters turned out in huge numbers for the ruling party all across the island.

In the end, the WP led by party chief Low Thia Khiang, 59, retained Aljunied against a tide of white, winning the GRC with a slim 50.95 per cent of votes cast, a drop of 3.77 percentage points from its winning share in 2011.

The race for Aljunied was the closest for the night and saw the PAP team asking for a recount as the difference in the margin was less than 2 percentage points.

But the WP team, also including party chairman Sylvia Lim, 50, Mr Pritam Singh, 39, Mr Chen Show Mao, 54, and Mr Muhamad Faisal Abdul Manap, 40, did just enough to hold off a challenge by the men in white led by four-term MP Yeo Guat Kwang.

A sober-looking Mr Low said that the WP had run a good campaign and that he was satisfied with the performance of its candidates in the face of a huge national swing to the PAP.

"Yes, unfortunately we lost Punggol East, but that's elections. You win, you lose, that's part and parcel of life," he said. "If you look at the result, it's a massive swing. The WP has done pretty well."

He also congratulated the PAP on winning a strong mandate and securing its fourth-generation leadership.

"But what I wanted to remind the PAP is to build trust with the people and the national institutions. These national institutions include the civil service, the judiciary and the mainstream media," he said.

The PAP team comprising Mr Yeo, insurance firm director Victor Lye, 53, senior bank officer Chua Eng Leong, 44, former teacher Shamsul Kamar, 43, and lawyer K. Muralidharan Pillai, 47, was dubbed by some as a "suicide squad", up against the

WP heavyweights who made history in 2011 when they won the opposition's first GRC.

But at several points throughout last night, it seemed as though Aljunied GRC could return to the PAP.

News of big PAP wins elsewhere started to worry WP activists as early as 9pm, who were also hearing that their support was dropping across the five Aljunied GRC wards.

WP heavyweights Ms Lim and Mr Chen lost their wards to their PAP counterparts but big wins from Mr Faisal's and Mr Singh's wards managed to tip the GRC over to the WP.

Party sources said that Ms Lim lost her ward by just 100 votes.

But Mr Singh won his ward with a share of about 55 per cent, while Mr Faisal took over 1,000 more votes than his rival in Kaki Bukit. Mr Low also won in Bedok Reservoir by about more than 1,000 votes.

The WP's poor performance was a huge turnaround from 2011, when it won all the five wards in Aljunied. That led to the exit of two PAP Cabinet ministers - then Foreign Minister George Yeo and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office Lim Hwee Hua.

WP activists last night were at a loss for words, saying that all indicators on the ground had pointed to a comfortable victory for the party in their stronghold.

One insider said: "All the signs were positive for a strong performance. No one can explain the results right now, we'll have to really analyse what happened."

Some WP supporters attributed the drop in support to the financial status of Aljunied-Hougang-Punggol East Town Council, which had become a major issue during the campaign.

The PAP said the WP had mismanaged the town council,

pointing to its questionable finances.

But WP leaders shot back, saying that there was no wrongdoing, with Mr Low declaring at one point that “I would be serving time if I was corrupt”.

Mr Jay Tan, 28, a bank worker, said: “I’m surprised. You get the impression that support for the WP is good from rallies and social media. I think the town council issue worked to PAP’s favour.”

The PAP team, on the other hand, were triumphant in their defeat.

Former Cabinet minister Lim Boon Heng, who advised the Aljunied team, said: “A heavyweight team against a team of rookies. I think we didn’t do too badly.” 



PAP’s Aljunied GRC candidates Yeo Guat Kwang (left) and Mr K. Muralidharan Pillai at Bedok Stadium.
PHOTO: MATTHIAS HO FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



The crowd at Hougang Stadium cheers as news emerges that the Workers' Party won Aljunied GRC.
ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

HOT SEAT: EAST COAST GRC

The fierce battleground that wasn't



Jubilant PAP supporters greet the East Coast GRC team, comprising Mr Lim Swee Say, Mr Lee Yi Shyan, Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman and Ms Jessica Tan, with a rockstar reception.
ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

Li Xueying & Wong Siew Ying

AT 9.30PM, MR LEE YI SHYAN was on his way to yet another counting centre when he received a call from Mr Lim Swee Say, asking him to join him at the Bedok branch of the People's Action Party (PAP) instead.

There, the two men settled down in front of the television to watch the news coverage of the election.

“It’s more comfortable,” Mr Lim told The Straits Times with a smile.

That the anchor minister of the PAP slate in East Coast GRC could relax in front of the TV instead of anxiously going from one counting centre to another on Polling Night, was a sign of just how his team’s margin was shaping up.

In the end, East Coast GRC was the fierce battleground that wasn’t.

The PAP team won handily over its Workers’ Party rivals, with 60.7 per cent of the votes cast, a 6 percentage point improvement over its performance in 2011.

Expectations had been that East Coast GRC, bordering the



Mr Lim Swee Say from the PAP team for East Coast GRC greeting supporters at Bedok Stadium.
ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM

WP-held Aljunied GRC and the most narrowly won GRC for the PAP in 2011, would see a tight race.

Sensing vulnerability, the WP put forward a slate that was touted to be its next generation of leaders.

Mr Gerald Giam, 37, an IT solutions architect; Mr Leon Perera, 44, a research and consultancy firm chief executive; Dr Daniel Goh, 42, a sociologist at the National University of Singapore; and Mr Mohamed Fairoz Shariff, 36, a former librarian, were the fresh faces also given the high-profile role of drafting the party's election manifesto.

They arrived at Hougang Stadium last night, subdued. Some supporters sobbed. Others left, leaving the most loyal to fill less than half the space that had been packed during the rallies. "Most of us thought it was going to be a close fight, since the WP has put together a good team to stand here," said engineer Samuel Wong, 25, a Simei resident.

Mr Giam thanked the quiet crowd and promised to continue to fight on. He declined to say if he would take up again the position of non-constituency MP, given to the opposition's best performing losing candidates.

It was a different mood at Bedok Stadium. Outside, all four PAP candidates arrived almost at the same time for the results. Glimpsing teammate, Minister of State Mohamad Maliki Osman, 50, Mr Lim walked over and gave him a hug,

Inside, jubilant PAP supporters greeted the team with a rockstar reception, mobbing them for an endless stream of selfies.

Dr Maliki and his wife, Madam Sadiyah Shahal, 47, a housewife, meanwhile shared a quiet moment, locked in a long embrace across a fence. She whispered: "We did it." He replied: "Thank you, sayang."

The fourth PAP candidate was Ms Jessica Tan, 49, Microsoft

Singapore's managing director.

Mr Lim told The Straits Times his team would not take the residents' support for granted: "The last four years, we did our best to serve the residents. Next five years, we are going to do even more."

The PAP team on the ground had waged a tactical campaign battle. While national leaders trained their guns

at the WP over its handling of finances at the Aljunied-Hougang-Punggol East Town Council, the East Coast GRC team avoided the negative campaigning that could have turned residents off.

Instead, it focused on the work done by its MPs, such as the upgrading of Bedok Central. The quartet had also revamped the way they engaged residents, emphasising intimate dialogue. Mr Lim, for

instance, conducted over 125 talks on Medishield Life and the Pioneer Generation Package, to groups ranging in size from 70 to 150.

East Coast GRC resident Annie See Toh, 40, an assistant human resources manager, called Mr Lim "a very people person", saying: "We always see him in the area meeting residents."

Hype over the WP slate may also have propelled a swathe of swing voters - concerned about the opposition's seemingly speedy ascent - to throw their support behind the PAP.



Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman kissing his wife Sadiah Shahal as they celebrated the PAP's victory in East Coast GRC at Bedok Stadium. ST PHOTO: CHEW SENG KIM

Said Ms Cheryl Tan, 33, a procurement executive: "We were quite worried because the WP has strong support base and the attendance at rallies was very high."

Ultimately, the WP's call for Singaporeans to "entrench the opposition" - its East Coast team at the forefront - failed to gain traction among the constituency's residents, half of whom live in private property. Instead, the PAP's exhortation for residents to compare the teams man for man, rather than to give the opposition a "discount" appeared to have caught on.

On what is next, Mr Lee said the team would be rolling out programmes for the elderly, youth and young parents.

Adds Mr Lim: "This time round, 38 per cent of the residents did not vote for us. We will not give up." 

Additional reporting by Joanna Seow, Wong Kim Hoh and Calvin Yang



WITH YOU
FOR YOU
FOR SINGAPORE

你我同心
为国为民

BERSAMA ANDA
UNTUK ANDA
DEMI SINGAPURA

உங்களுடன்
உங்களுக்காக
புது சிங்கப்பூர்
காக்க



HOT SEAT: PUNGGOL EAST SMC

PAP wrests single seat
back with narrow win

Christopher Tan, Jalelah Abu Baker & Marissa Lee

THE SUMS HAVE somehow added up for Mr Charles Chong, as the veteran MP reclaimed Punggol East for the People's Action Party (PAP) from the Workers' Party (WP).

Mr Chong, 62, beat the incumbent, Ms Lee Li Lian, 37, by a thin margin, garnering 51.76 per cent of valid votes.

His win ends the opposition's short hold on the single-member constituency, which it secured in January 2013 in a by-election called following the resignation of PAP MP Michael Palmer over an extramarital affair.

Back then, Ms Lee beat PAP's Dr Koh Poh Koon with 54.5 per cent of the votes.

During his campaign, Mr Chong dwelled on the affairs of the Punggol East town council, saying that Pasir Ris-Punggol town council had a surplus of \$1 million when it handed its

accounts over to the WP after the 2013 by-election.

The WP denied the claim vigorously, insisting that the town council had a deficit of \$282,009 then.

The debate took on a life of its own on social media, with professional accountants weighing in on the matter. And observers reckoned that the PAP's claim would backfire.

But as the latest election results have shown, that did



ABOVE: Mr Charles Chong greeting supporters at Bedok Stadium. ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA

PREVIOUS PAGE: Mr Charles Chong said he had a slight advantage as "some of the areas, I have taken care of".

ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN

not happen.

Mr Chong said his immediate plans were to “get (the) town council in order and some municipal issues, and also some issues which residents have brought up to me during the last few Meet-the-People Sessions”.

He also said residents had complained that maintenance of the town had “deteriorated”.

“There was not much I could do until I took back the town council, then we can know how much funds we have,” he said.

Asked if he expected to win, the man who claimed his first - and equally thin - SMC victory four years ago in Joo Chiat, said: “I never take things for granted. Most of my contests, they have been close. I never take anything for granted.”

He said he had a slight advantage as “some of the areas, I have taken care of before”.

Before Joo Chiat, Mr Chong was an MP for the Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC, which Punggol East was a part of.

Mr Chong, who has been in politics for nearly three decades, said he did not want to harp on the town council accounts, but the WP “kept on raising it during the rally, so I had to respond”.

“I think one way of resolving (this) once and for all is to have all the accounts checked, do a forensic, once and for all,” he added.

Ms Lee, who impressed residents in 2013 with her earnest and approachable ways, said that her loss may be down to “municipal issues”.

She broke down and cried after the sample count was done, but managed to compose herself later when she met the press.

“Right from the start, we cannot expect that we will win,” she said. “We have to fight for every vote. We cannot take any



WP's Ms Lee Li Lian thanks her supporters at Hougang Stadium.
ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

election for granted.”

Ms Lee looks poised to be offered a Non-Constituency Member of Parliament position because she lost by the thinnest margin among all losers.

But she said she would not take it up.

“I respect the voters’ decision,” she said.

With Punggol East back with the ruling party, the number of seats the opposition has in Parliament will shrink from seven to six. 

SMCS: FENGSHAN, SENGKANG WEST

Victories for PAP new face and incumbent



PAP's Ms Cheryl Chan getting a congratulatory hug after being declared the winner for Fengshan.
ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

Amelia Teng, Danson Cheong & Melody Zaccheus

FENGSHAN HAS NOT turned out to be “heavenly” for the Workers’ Party (WP) after all.

The team in blue lost to the People’s Action Party (PAP) by a sizeable margin despite high expectations to the contrary.

PAP's Cheryl Chan, a first-time candidate, garnered 57.52 per cent of 21,556 valid votes. She beat WP's Dennis Tan, 45, who was also a first-time contestant but probably not as familiar to residents as his rival. Ms Chan, 38, has been a long-time grassroots leader in the precinct carved out of the East Coast GRC after the 2011 elections.

On Instagram last month, WP chairman Sylvia Lim posted a photo of herself eating at the Fengshan Market and Food Centre, captioned "the taste of Fengshan - heavenly", and hashtagged #reasonstowin. Up till the moment last night when a sample count showed Ms Chan leading Mr Tan 57:43, punters were expecting the area previously under PAP's Raymond Lim to swing towards the opposition.

But Mr Kenneth Lim, 39, who grew up in Fengshan, did not



Ms Cheryl Chan, PAP's candidate for Fengshan SMC, awaits the results of the polls. ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA

think so. "I was very confident that Cheryl would win because she has done a lot of groundwork," the property agent said.

Spotted at the Bedok Stadium with his eight-year-old daughter, Mr Lim said Ms Chan is "very sincere and upfront with people".

Asked if she was surprised by her win, Ms Chan said: "I didn't speculate on the results from the beginning." She added: "I'm happy that the residents are supportive. I'll continue to work hard and serve them to the best of my abilities." Mr Tan, on the other hand, said he would like to "continue with my house visits, get to know residents better, and maybe win their support in the future".

Meanwhile, PAP incumbent Lam Pin Min, 46, has won Sengkang West SMC. Dr Lam got 62.11 per cent of the votes to beat his Workers' Party opponent, Mr Koh Choong Yong, 42. This represents a bigger win than in 2011, when Dr Lam defeated Mr Koh with 58.1 per cent of the vote.

But the single-member constituency has changed significantly since - nearly 40 per cent of its 30,119 voters did not vote there in 2011. The number of voters in the area has grown because 15 Build-to-Order developments, with about 10,500 flats in all, have been completed in the area. In addition, part of the ward was absorbed into Ang Mo Kio GRC with the redrawing of electoral boundaries.

Asked what he planned to do first, Dr Lam said residents had told him they wanted more childcare centres, wet markets and hawker centres. "All these will come in the coming years," he said, adding that there will be more infrastructure development to make Sengkang West "a better home". 



The Campaign



PAP secretary-general Lee Hsien Loong (centre) passes a campaign pamphlet to 18-month-old Hing Hze Xuan, who is in the arms of her grandmother, Madam Koh Geok Huay, 75. ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN



The PAP candidates for Pasir Ris-Punggol (from right) Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean, Ms Sun Xueling and Mr Ng Chee Meng greet stallholders at a wet market in Punggol Plaza on Sept 6, 2015.
ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA



Dr Ng Eng Hen, PAP's candidate for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC, chats with residents outside the market and food centre in Toa Payoh Lorong 1 on Sept 8, 2015. ST PHOTO: STEPHANIE YEOW



Mr Low Thia Kiang (standing third from left), secretary-general of the Workers' Party, and Marine Parade GRC candidates chat with residents in Geylang Serai market on Sept 7. The candidates are (from left) Mr Firuz Khan, Mr Yee Jenn Jong, Mr Terence Tan, Ms He Ting Ru and Mr Dylan Ng. ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH



SDP candidates Chong Wai Fung (second from right) and Dr Paul Tambyah (right) greet residents in Empress Road market on Sept 2, 2015. ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN

Huggers, baby carriers, auntie killers and more:
**GE2015 candidates’
 campaign styles**



PAP's Mr Tan Chuan-Jin with 19-month-old Gyven Lim and his father, Mr Vincent Lim, on Sept 6, 2015.

PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

May Chen & Lee Min Kok

STYLE IS KNOWING who you are, and what you want to say, American writer Gore Vidal said. Parliamentary hopefuls have been getting their messages across to voters by exuding several unique styles in the hustings so far. We sieve out the touchy-feely and the fitness fanatics from the autograph signers for some light-hearted observations from the campaign trail.

1. THE HUGGERS

Almost every candidate canvassing for votes on their walkabouts will greet residents with a handshake. Some take it one step further with a personal touch by hugging. And there are several styles of hugging.

We present the two-armed reacharound, witnessed when MacPherson candidate Tin Pei Ling was embraced by a supportive resident.



PAP's MacPherson candidate Tin Pei Ling hugs resident.



Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong and Madam Chu Eng Lan at Eunos Crescent Market and Food Centre on Sept 5, 2015. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

There is also the warm side-embrace as shown by Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong. It's no secret that the People's Action Party (PAP) veteran is a favourite at Marine Parade GRC, and 56-year-old Ubi



resident Madam Chu Eng Lan shows just how happy she is to see ESM Goh.

Then there's the no-words-needed-hug, as if there's such deep understanding and rapport between candidate and resident that the embrace says it all.

2. THE SINGERS AND DANCERS

When winning the battle for the voters' minds is simply not enough, go for their hearts. The result? We catch a glimpse of another side of the candidates that is sometimes lost in the intensity and seriousness



PAP's Potong Pasir candidate Sitoh Yih Pin dancing with residents.

of the ongoing hustings - a creative, spontaneous and, sometimes, more tender side.

The PAP's candidate for Potong Pasir SMC, Mr Sitoh Yih Pin, got the ball rolling when he joined a group of aunties in one of

their regular dance sessions, while East Coast GRC candidate Lee Yi Shyan showed off his singing chops with a rendition of Sparrow With A Bamboo Twig, by popular xinyao pioneer Liang Wern Fook, during a PAP rally in Bedok.



A screengrab from the video Mr Arthero Lim posted.

PHOTO: FACEBOOK/ HAOHAO RAO

Mr Arthero Lim, the SDA's candidate for Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC who is a film-maker, provided an amusing take on the Central Provident Fund, as he morphed into a melancholic singing uncle who wandered around a HDB neighbourhood to the tune of popular Hokkien song Wa Meng Ti (I Ask Heaven).

There was also an extended peek into the life of opposition politician

Chee Soon Juan. The SDP secretary-general's two daughters were the stars in a YouTube video as they strummed their guitars and sang McFly's It's All About You, along with a collage of pictures of Dr Chee and his family.



PAP candidate for Ang Mo Kio GRC Koh Poh Koon runs from door to door to meet residents.

3. THE FITNESS FANATICS

If you are going to be on your feet all day, every day while on the campaign trail, you might as well turn it into a real workout, right?

Judging by the sweat-soaked

shirt he had on as he hopped from house to house, Ang Mo Kio candidate Koh Poh Koon had definitely had a workout.

By now, many would have seen Social and Family Development Minister Tan Chuan-Jin's sprint from house to house in his customised red "Maju-Lah" running shoes. Several others like PAP's Lim Biow Chuan (below left) have also resorted to quicker steps in order to get more house visits in.



Cabinet-mate Communications and Information Minister Yaacob Ibrahim, who wears a Jawbone Up activity tracker, uploads a screenshot of his activity for the day at the end of each day of campaigning on his Facebook page (above right). His biggest workout so far was on Day 3: 23,267 steps over 18.6km, translating into 2,465 calories burnt. He understandably enjoyed his roti prata breakfast the next morning.



Meanwhile, former chief of defence force Ng Chee Meng, who is contesting as part of the team in Pasir Ris-Punggol, got his hands on some resistance bands during a morning exercise session with residents.

4. THE AUTOGRAPHERS

Step aside, One Direction. The Sept 11 polls have shown that politicians are sought after for their autographs just as much as Harry Styles.

Scores of people have been getting in line to get Singapore Democratic Party chief Chee Soon Juan to autograph his book.

But even for those who are not authors, there are other things to pen their name to.



The queue for Dr Chee Soon Juan's autograph stretches to Boat Quay.

Take PAP's Patrick Tay for example. The West Coast candidate has been seen putting pen to photo card, and even voters' shirts.



One resident, in fact, was so supportive of the PAP East Coast anchor minister Lim Swee Say that he asked for the team's campaign poster to be put up on his gates, with the Manpower Minister's autograph.



5. THE BABY CARRIERS

No election anywhere goes by without a politician carrying, cuddling, high-fiving and kissing babies, toddlers or young children.

Defence Minister Ng Eng Hen met young Bishan Toa-Payoh resident Regina on a walkabout on Day 3 of campaigning. He juxtaposed their latest snapshot together beside a heartwarming photo of him carrying her back in 2011 when the last elections were held. "Both Regina and Bishan-Toa Payoh have grown bigger," he said.



Minister of State for Defence and National Development Maliki Osman (below left) and Minister of State for Trade and Industry Teo Ser Luck have both scored points while out canvassing for votes.



Being out and about on the campaign trail has meant time away from her newborn granddaughter for Jalan Besar candidate Lily Neo (above right). Her son and daughter-in-law, however, surprised her by bringing the little baby girl to see her while she was visiting residents.

The blissful grandmother posted a picture of her with her granddaughter on Facebook, drawing some netizens to comment: "Granddaughter? You where got so old?"

6. THE AUNTIE KILLERS

Underestimate the auntie brigade at your own peril.

Building rapport with them takes a certain kind of skill not all candidates possess.

The still debonair Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong is one candidate who exudes ageless charm, while Workers'



Madam Lim Eng Lye, 60, who sells vegetarian foodstuff, says "I hope you get elected." after presenting Mr Goh with a bouquet of flowers at Eunos Crescent Market and Food Centre on Sept 5, 2015. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Party chief Low Thia Khiang, who lent his larger-than-life presence to the candidates on walkabouts in Marine Parade and East Coast GRCs, is still proving to be a huge hit with the ladies.



PAP's Mr Chan Chun Sing and Ms Joan Pereira greeting fishmongers at Tiong Bahru Market.

Tampines GRC candidate Baey Yam Keng's good looks and social media savvy have earned him a Facebook fan club page. NTUC secretary-general and Tanjong Pagar candidate Chan Chun Sing (above) has also impressed many with his ability to banter with residents on his walkabouts – check out his interaction with the auntie selling seafood in a wet market below. 



The PAP Tanjong Pagar GRC candidates chance upon white canvas shoes with red and blue stripes, which are the PAP colours, and bought six pairs at \$11 each. PHOTO: COURTESY OF ANG JOO MOY



PAP's candidate for Marine Parade GRC, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, runs from house to house in Lorong Melayu estate on the campaign trail on Sept 2, 2015. ST PHOTO: JERMYN CHOW



Mr Tan Jee Say, secretary-general of SingFirst, greets a resident in Commonwealth on Sept 2, 2015.

ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



Workers' Party chairman and candidate for Aljunied GRC, Ms Sylvia Lim (second from left), waves to motorists in Sengkang East Way. Some sound their car horn when they see her. ST PHOTO: STEPHANIE YEOW



Two-year-old Ng Kai Xuan gives Dr Mohamad Maliki Osman a peck on the cheek, during the PAP East Coast GRC team's walkabout at The Marketplace in New Upper Changi Road on Sept 4, 2015.

PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



NSP's candidate for MacPherson SMC, Mr Cheo Chai Chen (centre), during a walkabout in Pipit Road on Sept 4, 2015. ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH



Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong, chats with Madam Ong Kim Phong (centre), 89, and Madam Tan Cheng Siew, 68, in Marine Crescent on Sept 6, 2015. PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



An elderly resident looks at the WP East Coast GRC team's poster near The Marketplace in New Upper Changi Road on Sept 4, 2015. The WP team comprises Mr Gerald Giam, Dr Daniel Goh, Mr Leon Perera and Mr Mohamed Fairoz Shariff. PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



WP candidate Chen Show Mao (third from left) and PAP candidate Victor Lye (third from right), who are contesting in Aljunied GRC, greet residents outside Heartland Mall on Sept 8, 2015. PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



SPP candidate for Hong Kah North Ravi Philemon releases his manifesto in Bukit Batok West on Sept 3, 2015. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



Dr Ang Yong Guan from SingFirst, who is contesting in Tanjong Pagar GRC, goes door to door with party member Lim Oo. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



SDP secretary-general Chee Soon Juan joins party members in a walkabout in Adam Road Food Centre on Sept 2, 2015. ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN



PAP candidate for MacPherson SMC Tin Pei Ling and her activists distributing the PAP manifesto to residents in the ward on Sept 4, 2015. ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH



The Rallies



The crowd at the Workers' Party's first rally at Hougang Central. TNP PHOTO: JONATHAN CHOO

Ready for rallies

Ong Hwee Hwee
Deputy Digital Editor

EIGHT DAYS, nine parties, 65 rallies.

Tens of thousands of Singaporeans flocked to election rallies held across the island from Sept 2 to 9 to hear what the politicians had to say, or simply to soak up the atmosphere.

They came, they listened, they cheered and jeered.

The politicians swayed voters with their promises, took swipes at their opponents, and one even sobbed.

All nine parties, as well as independent candidate Han Hui Hui, held rallies. Mr Samir Salim Neji, the other independent contesting the election, was the only candidate who did not organise one.

The ruling People's Action Party (PAP) had the most number of rallies – 23 in all, including a

lunchtime rally near the historic Fullerton Square.

The Workers' Party (WP) came in second with eight.

The evening rallies, held in open fields and stadiums, attracted crowds which ranged from hundreds to thousands.

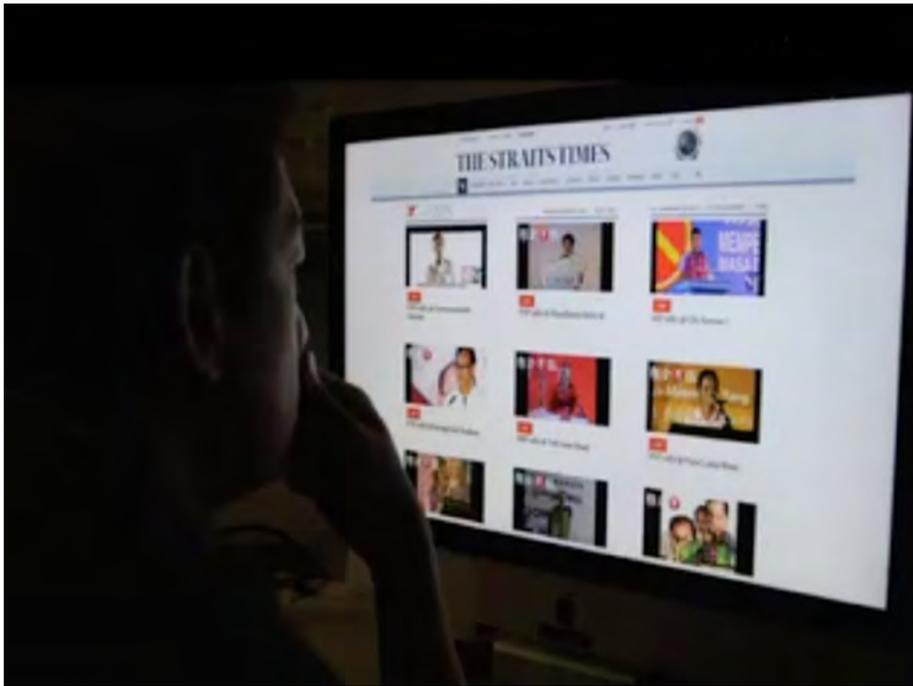
The rallies were attended by people from all walks of life: the young sat next to the old, the office worker stood next to the housewife, the loyal supporter brushed shoulders with the undecided voter.

Two themes stood out from the PAP rallies: the party's track record – and the opposition's lack thereof – and the significance of this election for leadership renewal and Singapore's future.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, at the PAP lunchtime rally on Sept 8, exhorted voters to back the right party so the country would continue to succeed for the next 50 years.

Mr Lee had said the next prime minister is likely to be drawn from among the MPs elected in this election.

While PM Lee was the star of the PAP rallies, his deputy



The rallies were streamed live on ST's GE2015 website.



**TAP TO READ
7 MEMORABLE RALLY
SPEECHES YOU WON'T
WANT TO MISS**

(Available only on desktop
and Apple devices)

Tharman Shanmugaratnam shared some of the limelight. In one of his two rally appearances, he poked holes in the opposition's proposal to hike social spending by pointing out that it would mean raising taxes for middle-income workers.

The WP rallies, which pulled in large crowds, took on the feel of a rock concert.

The spotlight was on party chief Low Thia Kiang, who fired up the crowd with his fiery speeches – especially the Teochew ones – and by taking swipes at the PAP government.

The party's key message: Send more WP MPs into Parliament so that the party can better scrutinise government policies.

The WP candidates also made use of the rallies to rebut the PAP's criticism of the party's management of the Aljunied-Hougang-Punggol East Town Council.

Another star of the rallies was Dr Chee Soon Juan of the Singapore Democratic Party. He contested for the first time in 15 years, after sitting out the past two elections due to bankruptcy.

He was on a charm offensive: speaking in different languages and dialects, and peppering his speeches with jokes. He also fired salvos at the PAP, blaming its policies for making Singaporeans' lives more stressful.

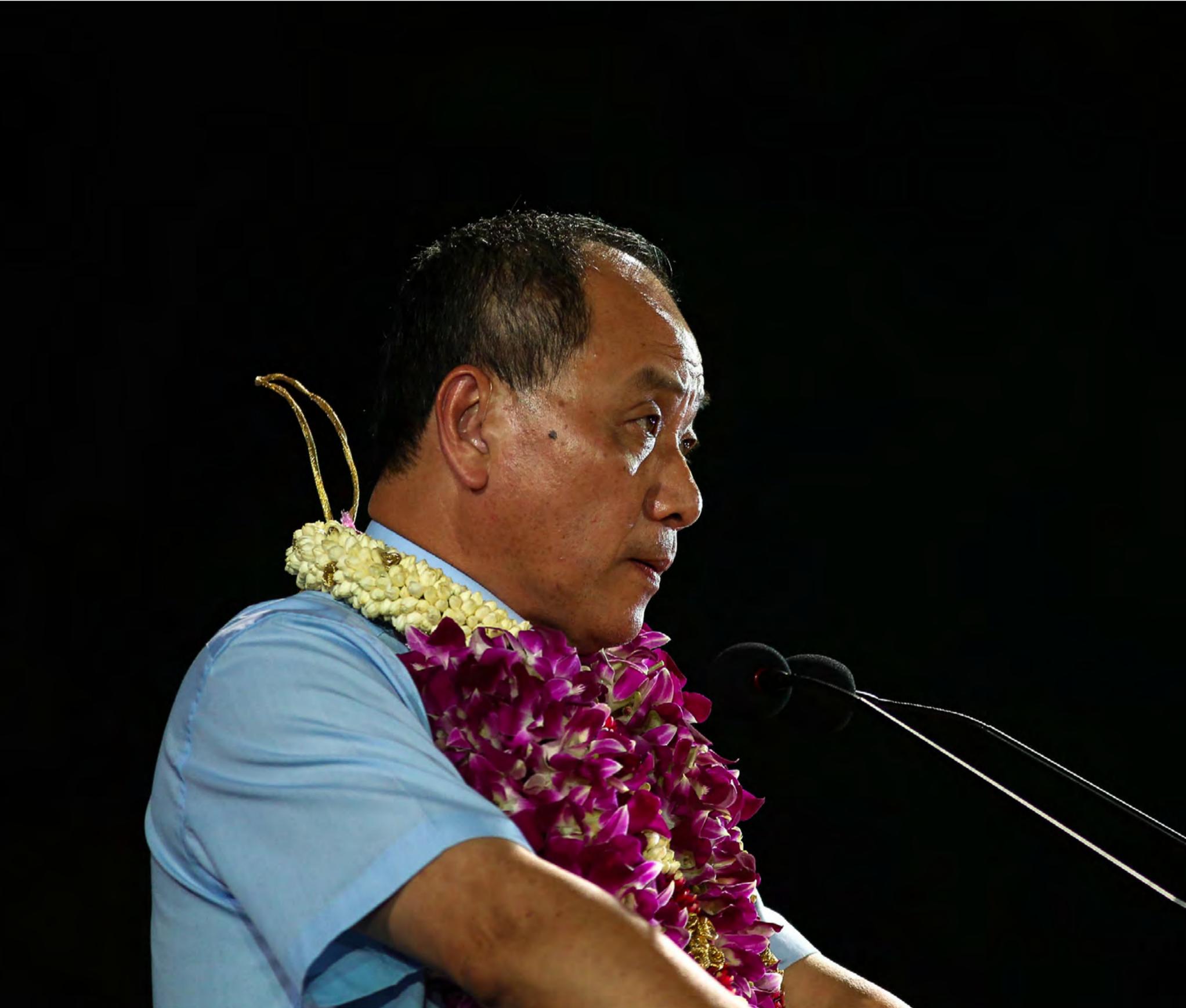
While other opposition politicians took aim at the PAP during their rallies, one candidate made the headlines for a different reason.

At a National Solidarity Party rally, candidate Kevryn Lim was reduced to a sobbing wreck at one point when the single mum talked about a subject close to her heart – the lack of support afforded to single parents.

Recap the highlights of the rallies, through a selection of essays and pictures. 



Bedok Stadium
is packed
on Sept 9, 2015
for Workers' Party's
final rally.
ST PHOTO: WANG HUI FEN



Workers' Party chief Low Thia Kiang speaks to a packed Bedok Stadium on Sept 9, 2015.

ST PHOTO: WANG HUI FEN



PAP candidate for East Coast GRC Lim Swee Say with supporters at a rally in Bedok Stadium on Sept 3, 2015. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



PM Lee Hsien Loong speaks during the lunchtime PAP rally at the promenade area beside UOB Plaza on Sept 8, 2015. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG



SDP chief Chee Soon Juan speaks to a lunchtime crowd at the promenade of UOB Plaza on Sept 7, 2015.

ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



PM Lee Hsien Loong takes a picture of the crowd at the PAP lunchtime rally.

ST PHOTO: BASIL EDWARD TEO



Kindergarten teacher Ruselliawaty Rahmat (second from left), 32, and her colleagues from the PCF Zhenghua branch, with signs they made themselves at the PAP's Petir Road rally on Sept 5, 2015.

ST PHOTOS: YEO SAM JO

Sweaty nights, people-packed and still they throng the rallies

Wong Kim Hoh
Senior writer

DO NOT DRINK. And do not drive.

That is advice anyone going to a rally should heed.

I found out the hard way when I decided to go to the Workers' Party (WP) rally in Boon Keng Road last Thursday night.



Bus driver Ong Ah Guan, 53, with his collection of flags of opposition parties. He was at the SingFirst rally in Queenstown on Sept 5, 2015.

ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI

Tummy full from a five-course Chinese dinner and copious amounts of Oolong tea, I did not expect to be stuck in a jam for nearly 40 minutes trying to filter into Balestier Road from the Central Expressway.

I spent another half an hour circling the Boon Keng and Bendemeer area in a state of high anxiety, desperately hoping that I would find not only a carpark but also a washroom as well.

I found out later that I could have spared myself a lot of grief if I had headed down to the Delta Hockey Pitch in Tiong Bahru instead to listen to independent candidate Han Hui Hui.

Low Thia Kiang and his WP team were like Bono and U2 playing to a packed stadium.

As in previous elections, the WP has been pulling in the biggest crowds at its rallies.

But every night since last

Wednesday, thousands of people of

all ages, ilk and stripe have been criss-crossing the island to hear the speeches of politicians from both the ruling People's Action Party and the opposition.

They crammed overhead bridges, stood on chairs and barricades, spread themselves out on picnic mats and jostled with the sweaty masses.

Some came in pyjamas, others in their party best. Some came alone, others in groups.

There were retirees and housewives, professionals and labourers, hipsters and intellectuals, heartlanders and condo dwellers.

The curious were there. So were the fervent, the disgruntled and the undecided.

Hungry ghosts? Never mind.

The haze? No problem, just wear a mask.

So we saw the likes of Mr Michael Tong, 29, who took his niece Megan Sek, two, to the PAP rally in Bukit Panjang last night.

And Madam Sheila Ho, 88, who turned up at the Singapore Democratic Party's rally in Commonwealth Avenue in a wheelchair.

And there was bus driver Ong Ah Guan, 53, seen brandishing a pole with flags of all the opposition parties.

A Tanjong Pagar GRC voter, he attended the SingFirst rally in Queenstown Stadium last night before hightailing it to the Singapore Democratic Party's rally.

He declared that he supports all opposition parties; his top concern was transparency.

Rallies are glorious occasions to catch glimpses of Singaporean behaviour at its most intriguing and fascinating.

Last Friday night, I went to the PAP rally in Bedok North Avenue 4 and was struck by how orderly and well-behaved everyone was.

A couple of hundred supporters sat politely on white plastic seats, with several in the front row holding electronic boards declaring "PAP We Love You" and "PAP Forever".

There was no fiery rhetoric from the stage, just calm and reasoned speeches by the likes of Fengshan candidate Cheryl Chan and Manpower Minister Lim Swee Say, their voices reverberating in the industrial buildings across the road.



**TAP TO WATCH
DO SINGAPOREANS
KNOW THEIR PARTY
LOGOS?**

(Available only on desktop
and Apple devices)



Madam Sheila Ho, 88 asked her daughter to take her to the Singapore Democratic Party rally in Commonwealth Avenue. ST PHOTO: JOYCE LIM

At critical points, a posse of supporters in white at the front would blow their whistles and wave their flags. And the crowd would dutifully break into applause.

I then headed down to the Singapore People's Party rally in Toa Payoh Stadium.

The crowd was a little bigger, and raucous.

That, I suspect, was due in part to the speakers. As opposition parties are wont to do, they took jibes at the Government and certain ministers and peppered their speeches with words and phrases which provoked reactions: foreigners, CPF, MRT breakdowns.

But even the rowdy ones quietened when opposition veteran Chiam See Tong signalled that he wanted to stand up and speak.



A supporter with a poster of WWE wrestler Triple H, a pun on independent candidate Han Hui Hui's initials. TNP PHOTO: AZIM AZMAN

With speech and mobility affected by two strokes, he often had to start and stop. And when he paused, a silence descended upon the venue.

It moved quite a few people.

"I am not convinced by some of the speakers here tonight but that was quite a touching sight," said marketing executive Alan Lee, 35.

It was his third rally in as many nights.

"I think it is the only time when Singaporeans feel free to say and do things they do not normally do," said Mr Lee.

Indeed, rallies are the only times when I see so many Singaporeans openly declaring their loyalty and affection, or hostility and disfavour, towards policies, politicians and parties.

So they cheered and jeered, hollered and heckled, and expressed themselves piquantly in so many languages - Hokkien, Tamil, Cantonese, Teochew and Malay.

It almost feels like catharsis, and no need to apply for a licence at Hong Lim Park.

Last night, a colleague at the SPP rally in Hong Kah North said I would have appreciated the master of ceremonies Fazil Talip.

He made helpful announcements about where the nearest toilet was. In Block 424, apparently. 



Spectators at the National Solidarity Party rally in Tampines. The writer met various folks there, from rally-hoppers to dyed-in-the-wool opposition supporters. ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH

Passion and pain in the opposition crowd

John Lui
Film Correspondent

OVER A COUPLE of general elections, I've found that these are the people you will meet at opposition rallies: Folks who show up because they consider showing up a political act, like cocking a snook at the ruling party; the tourists who rally-

hop to see which way the wind is blowing in that zone; angry people who refuse to talk to me; angry people who talk to me and work themselves into a rage-induced trance (If you have ever met one of those taxi drivers, you will know what I mean).

Last Saturday night, Sept 5, in a field in Tampines where the National Solidarity Party (NSP) held a rally, I think I met members from every one of these groups.

Retired property agent John Wong, 59, is a dyed-in-the-wool opposition man. It is said that PAP supporters support the PAP for various reasons, while opposition supporters support the opposition for one reason: Because they are not the PAP. Mr Wong is that guy.

He has no particular allegiance to the NSP. He will back anyone who backs him. He does not care about candidate qualifications. "Give me the worst opposition candidate or a PAP candidate and I will still vote for the opposition," he says, his finger jabbing the air .

His grievances are the classic quartet of population size, foreign talent, housing prices, CPF. People around him stop and listen as he lists everything wrong with Singapore. "6.9 million? Siao ah! Train break down and break down already," says Mr Wong, who is married, with no children. He likes to use scary apocalyptic terms - a big PAP win will drown Singapore under a wave of foreigners, the GST will skyrocket, and so on.

He talks about human poop left near his void deck ("Must be from a foreigner lah," suggests an onlooker) and how his town council's political stripe has little to do with the ability to de-poop an area.

After 30 minutes of heated commentary, he tells me he's going to Punggol East SMC to attend the Workers' Party rally. "I'm going to gauge the size, the atmosphere. From there you can see," he says. He has a gift, he says, a kind of vote



**TAP TO WATCH
SEEN, SOLD AND
SHAKEN AT THE RALLIES**

(Available only on desktop
and Apple devices)

divining.

The tipsters do not view Tampines GRC as a hot seat. Mr Wong glances at the crowd and estimates it to be 5,000. It looks more like 2,000 to me. But we share the same verdict. This is not a strong showing, he notes reluctantly. He is upbeat about a couple of other areas, though, and dashes off to find their rallies.

Hanging back on the fringes is Mr Morgan James, 50. The distributor of health supplements is self-employed, single and Singaporean. He lives nearby and dropped in to have a listen.

He smiles when the issue of foreign talent is brought up. He used to work in restaurants. The food and beverage industry employs a large number of foreigners, both as wait staff and as managers.

“The people who took the most sick leave were Singaporeans,” he says. That kind of entitled behaviour irked him a lot.

That, and the desire to be in control of his own time, is why he quit the industry.

He remembers a time when he was almost mugged in Jakarta. A group of men walked up to him on the street within sight of his hotel, demanding his wallet. He ran for his life. The experience, and how casually Singaporeans are able to walk out on the streets day and night, are crucial to Mr James’ politics. The classic quartet of gripes that trouble people like Mr Wong is not.

But Mr James was the last neutral person I met that evening.

A tudung-wearing woman, an administrative assistant who wants to be known as Ms Nisa K., 53, wants a better deal for her children and thinks the opposition will deliver it.

So does a 50-year-old sales director for an IT firm, who



**TAP TO WATCH
TAKE 5 WITH ARNOLD:
NEW FACES FAIL TO
DAZZLE AT RALLIES**

(Available only on desktop
and Apple devices)

gives his name as Danny L. (“You won’t report me to the police, right?” he says, repeating a joke about the media that I heard about three times that night. It never gets old. Actually, it does.)

“Singapore is run like a corporation. It’s all about the bottom line,” says Danny, his wife and national-serviceman son beside him nodding. Thinking in purely business terms, nothing improves performance more than competition, he says. Hence, opposition.

I imagine he would be the PAP’s nightmare: A white-collar manager who ignores past performance and focuses only on future rewards. No loyalty, no sentimental attachments, just dividends for him and his family in the next quarter.

I am not sure what to feel about this. As political analysts are fond of saying, it just creates opposition parties that are clones of the most successful party – the Coca Cola v Pepsi problem.

Are you willing to give up something in exchange for a government that favours caring over competitiveness, I ask Danny. Yes, he says, if he has to pay more in taxes for social services, and accept less growth for a higher quality of life, he will do so with pleasure.

And there’s the rub. When it comes to working out the trade-offs – competitive v caring; low taxes v more services and so on – we might all start disagreeing all over again. 



PAP's Nee Soon GRC candidate K. Shanmugam and his team arrive in Yishun Stadium for the rally on Sept 8, 2015. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



SDP candidates, including secretary-general Chee Soon Juan (second from right), at the rally in Jurong East Stadium on Sept 7, 2015. ST PHOTO: YEO KAI WEN



WP candidates running in East Coast GRC (from left) Mr Gerald Giam, Mr Mohamad Fairuz Shariff, Dr Daniel Goh and Mr Leon Perera take a bow at the rally in front of Block 155 Simei Road on Sept 6, 2015.

ST PHOTO: DESMOND LIM



WP candidate Sylvia Lim leaving rallies in a car driven by her boyfriend, former footballer Quah Kim Song. ST PHOTOS: CAROLINE CHIA AND ONG WEE JIN



Members of the public line the street to shake hands with SPP chief Chiam See Tong after the party's rally on Sept 8, 2015. ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN



SPP's candidate for Potong Pasir SMC Lina Chiam speaks at a rally in Potong Pasir Avenue 1 on Sept 8, 2015.
ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN



SingFirst candidates cheer at the rally in Boon Lay Way on Sept 7, 2015.

PHOTO: MATTHIAS HO FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



SDA chief Desmond Lim (centre) at a rally in Pasir Ris Park on Sept 5, 2015. ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN



RP chief Kenneth Jeyaretnam (centre) with the party's candidates at their final rally in Buangkok on Sept 9, 2015. PHOTO: MATTHIAS HO FOR THE STRAITS TIMES



Independent candidate for Radin Mas SMC Han Hui Hui speaks at her first rally in Delta Hockey Pitch on Sept 3, 2015.

ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG



NSP candidate for Tampines GRC Choong Hon Heng at a rally in Circuit Road on Sept 7, 2015.

ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



PAP new face Amrin Amin (far right) snaps a photo of ESM Goh Chok Tong (far left) and PM Lee Hsien Loong as Mr Chee Hong Tat speaks during the lunchtime rally on Sept 8, 2015. ST PHOTO: BASIL EDWARD TEO



(From left) Madam Yu-Foo Yee Shoon, Mr Hawazi Daipi, Dr Teo Ho Pin, DPM Tharman Shanmugaratnam, Dr Vivian Balakrishnan, Mr Liang Eng Hwa, Mr Christopher de Souza and Ms Sim Ann at a PAP rally on Sept 5, 2015. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG



The WP's last rally before Polling Day at Bedok Stadium on Sept 9, 2015.

ST PHOTO: WANG HUI FEN



The Parties



People's Action Party

In power since 1959, the People's Action Party was challenged in every single seat this election. Led by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the party in white reconnected with voters to win a resounding victory.



PM Lee Hsien Loong waves to the lunchtime crowd at UOB Plaza at the rally on Sept 8, 2015.

ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH

People's Action Party (PAP)

Seats contested: 89

Wards contested: 29

GRC: Ang Mo Kio, Aljunied, Bishan-Toa Payoh, Chua Chu Kang, East Coast, Holland-Bukit Timah, Jalan Besar, Jurong, Marine Parade, Nee Soon, Marsiling-Yew Tee, Pasir Ris-Punggol, Sembawang, Tanjong Pagar, Tampines, West Coast

SMC: Bukit Batok, Bukit Panjang, Fengshan, Hong Kah North, Hougang, MacPherson, Mountbatten, Pioneer, Potong Pasir, Punggol East, Radin Mas, Sengkang West, Yuhua

Seats won: 83

Wards won: 27

Vote share (in areas contested): 69.9 per cent



Supporters at Yishun Primary School on Nomination Day on Sept 1, 2015. ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA

The ruling People's Action Party's bid to reverse a decline in vote share that saw the opposition claim an historic GRC win in 2011 met with resounding success.

When the dust settled on Polling Day, the PAP had claimed 83 seats out of 89 in the most hotly-contested election since independence.

"It's a good result for the PAP, but it's an excellent result for Singapore," said Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong at a press conference after the election results were announced.

He added that it could not have been done without good support from young Singaporeans.



It's a good result for the PAP, but it is an excellent result for Singapore

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

For the first time, every eligible voter got to vote as all 89 seats in 29 electoral divisions were contested. Some 2.25 million Singaporeans cast their votes on Polling Day.

Despite the increased competition, the PAP's vote share rose to 69.9 per cent from 60.1 per cent in 2011.

The party had campaigned with the slogan "With You, For You, For Singapore", championing the progress Singapore had made in the last 50 years and the PAP's achievements since the 2011 General Election.

Their 88-page manifesto not only lists developments for the next term of office, but also looked back at Singapore's development since independence, and ahead to the next 15 to 20 years.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, stressing the importance of political succession, said at the launch of the party's

manifesto that the next prime minister was likely to be drawn from those elected in the 2015 General Election.

Like in past elections, the PAP introduced potential office-holders in their new faces.

Among them were former Chief of Defence Force Ng Chee Meng, the highest-ranking military man to enter Singapore



PAP candidates Tin Pei Ling, Desmond Choo and Teo Ser Luck keep an eye on the vote count at Bedok Stadium. ST PHOTO: CAROLINE CHIA

politics, and former top civil servant Chee Hong Tat.

However, the PAP drew more candidates from the private sector and grassroots in this election, including former TV gameshow host Darryl David, animal activist Louis Ng and long-time grassroots volunteer Cheryl Chan.

There were also a number of returning candidates who lost in earlier polls but entered Parliament this time after joining teams in other wards, including Mr Ong Ye Kung in Sembawang GRC, Dr Koh Poh Koon in Ang Mo Kio GRC, and Mr Desmond Choo in Tampines GRC.

All in, the party introduced 24 new candidates with a median age of 42.3 years. This was also their oldest group of



Flags line the field in Bedok North Avenue 4 where the PAP rally for Fengshan SMC is held on Sept 4, 2015. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

new faces in more than 30 years.

Fourteen veteran PAP MPs retired this time, notably former Transport Minister Lui Tuck Yew, who announced he would step down before the hustings began.

In a departure from earlier campaigns, the party introduced all its candidates before Nomination Day.

In another new move, none of the introductions was done at party headquarters in New Upper Changi Road. Instead, while some were held at branch offices, others were unveiled at press conferences at hawker centres and coffee shops.

Departing MPs from the wards were also present at these sessions.

The election also saw the Prime Minister rely more on his personal popularity to appeal to voters.

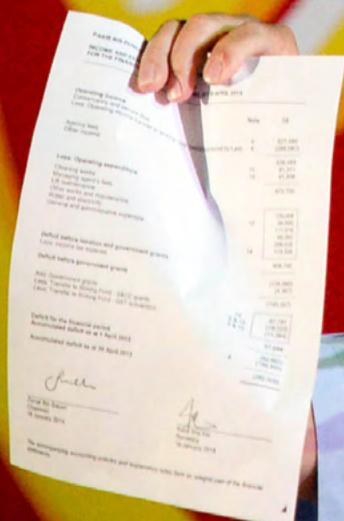
He spoke at three night rallies and a lunchtime rally in the city, and his posters also appeared in every corner of Singapore, not just in Ang Mo Kio GRC where he was seeking another term as MP. 



Workers' Party

Started by former chief minister David Marshall in 1957, it is the oldest surviving active political party in Singapore.

Revived under the leadership of Mr Low Thia Kiang, it failed to make further inroads in this election, and even lost one ward to the PAP.



WP chief Low Thia Kiang holds a sheet of paper stating that Punggol East SMC had a deficit of \$280,000 when WP took over.
ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

Workers' Party (WP)

Seats contested: 28

Wards contested: 10

GRC: Aljunied, East Coast, Jalan Besar, Marine Parade, Nee Soon

SMC: Fengshan, Hougang, MacPherson, Punggol East, Sengkang West

Seats won: 6

Wards won: 2

Vote share (in areas contested): 39.8 per cent



At the end of WP's final rally on Sept 9, 2015, the candidates took a group selfie, also known as a wefie.

ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



WP candidates taking the pledge at the end of their rally in Bedok Stadium on Sept 9, 2015.

ST PHOTO: ONG WEE JIN

Chew Hui Min

The Workers' Party is the main opposition party in Parliament, with six MPs elected in the 2015 General Election.

Despite keeping six of the seven seats it had in Parliament, the party did worse than in the 2011 election in terms of vote share, as the opposition parties lost ground amid a nationwide vote swing towards the PAP.

Its vote share of 39.8 per cent in this election was a drop of 6.8 percentage points from 46.6 per cent in 2011.

WP lost one seat in Punggol East SMC, which it won in a by-election in 2013.

It retained two wards - Aljunied GRC and Hougang SMC - but with a lower vote share compared to 2011.

In fact, the contest between the WP and PAP in Aljunied was so close that there was a recount as the margin was less than 2 percentage points.

In the end, the WP team, led by party chief Low Thia Kiang, held on to the ward with just 50.95 per cent of



You win, you lose, that's part and parcel of life... If you look at the result, it's a massive swing. The WP has done pretty well.

WP chief Low Thia Kiang

the votes.

In total, the party fielded 28 candidates in 10 constituencies. But it failed to make further inroads.

The WP campaign slogan “Empower your future” does not appear to have resonated with voters as well as their 2011 slogan of a “First World Parliament”.

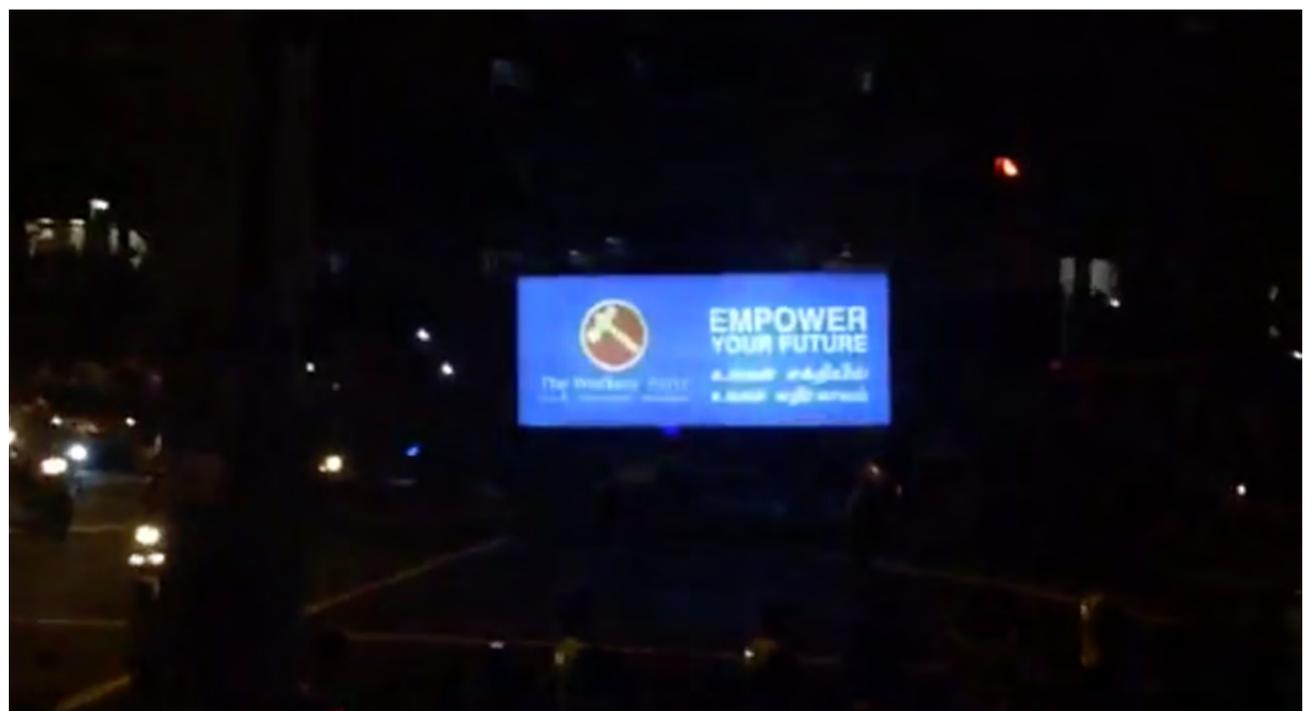
The main thrust of their 46-page campaign manifesto is ensuring “a system of government where there are adequate checks and balances without political gridlock”.

Some policy proposals include the introduction of a minimum wage, limiting foreign manpower growth, nationalising public transport assets and introducing a more progressive tax regime.

The WP had one of the youngest team of candidates in this election, and seven out of their 16 new faces were below the age of 40.

They were also better qualified than candidates from the other opposition parties, with many entrepreneurs and professionals among them. They included Oxford graduate Leon Perera, 44, the CEO of a research and consultancy firm; sociology associate professor Daniel Goh, 42; and lawyers He Ting Ru, 32, and Dennis Tan, 45. 

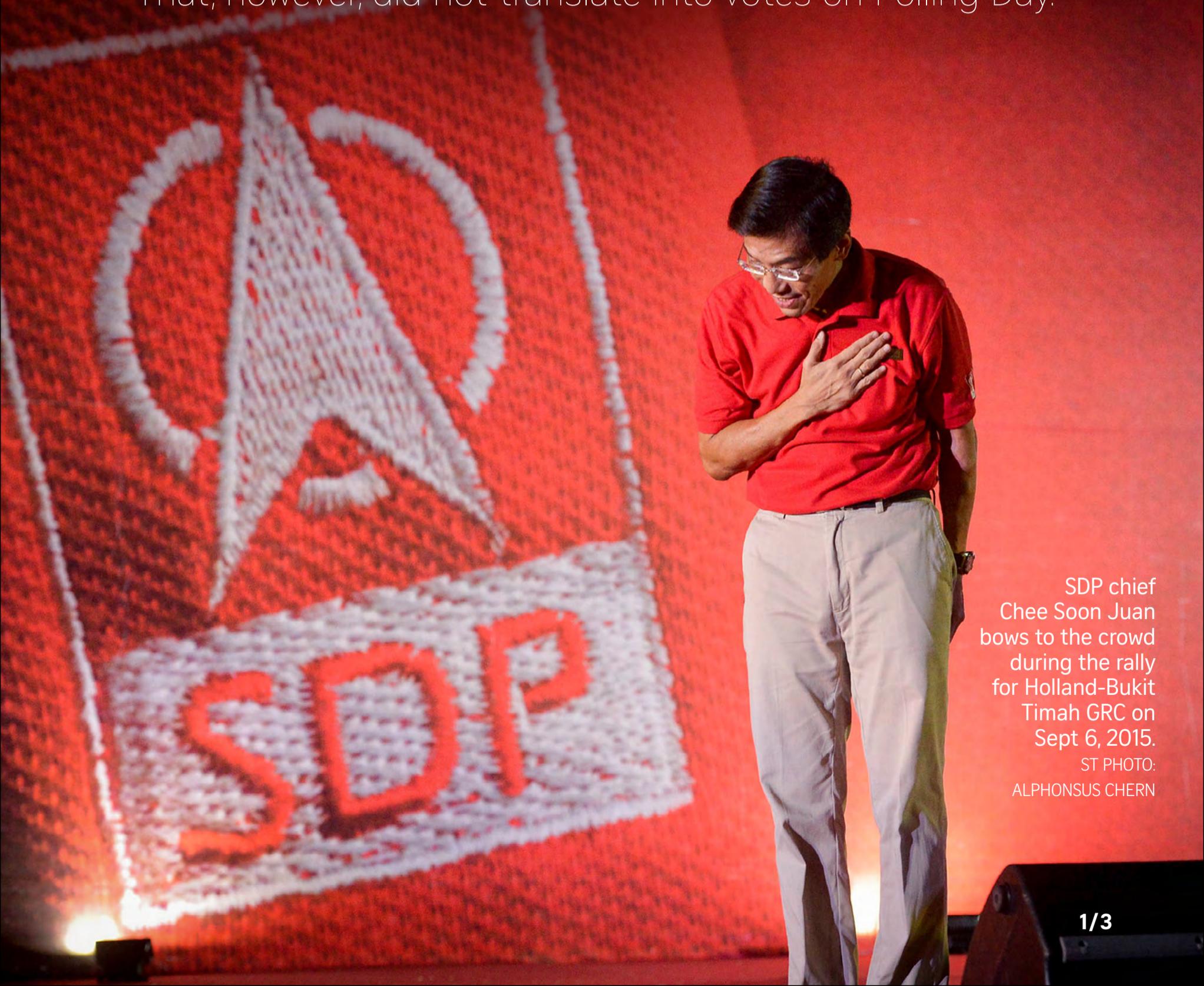
A prime mover with a 20-foot container emblazoned with the WP logo. The vehicle, dubbed Optimus Prime after a lead character in the Transformers movie, was spotted near rally sites.





Singapore Democratic Party

SDP chief Chee Soon Juan made a return this general election to an unexpectedly warm reception by supporters. That, however, did not translate into votes on Polling Day.



SDP chief Chee Soon Juan bows to the crowd during the rally for Holland-Bukit Timah GRC on Sept 6, 2015.

ST PHOTO:
ALPHONSUS CHERN

Singapore Democratic Party (SDP)

Seats contested: 11

Wards contested: 5

GRC: Holland-Bukit Timah, Marsiling-Yew Tee

SMC: Bukit Batok, Bukit Panjang, Yuhua

Vote share (in areas contested): 31.2 per cent



A member of SDP wears the party's flags in her hair at the merchandise booth at the rally in Woodlands Stadium on Sept 9, 2015. ST PHOTO: DESMOND LIM

Chew Hui Min

The Singapore Democratic Party was touted as the comeback kid of this election, with the return of secretary-general Chee Soon Juan, who sat out the last two elections.

He was declared bankrupt after failing to pay \$500,000 in damages for defaming then-Senior Minister Lee Kuan Yew and then-Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong during the 2001 general election, and was cleared of bankruptcy in 2012.

In this election, the party fielded 11 candidates in five wards.

Its rallies were well attended, raising expectations that the party would put up a tough fight in the areas it contested.

But it managed a vote share of only 31.2 per cent, 5.5 percentage points less than its 36.8 per cent in the 2011 election.

However, it saw the smallest slide in vote share among the opposition parties.

The party had some radical proposals for the healthcare system. It wanted to do away with Medisave, Medifund and MediShield, and replace it with a single pool of funds to which the Government contributes 84 per cent. Its campaign slogan was “Your Voice in Parliament”.

It also proposes to replace gross domestic product with a Genuine Progress Indicator that also takes into account Singaporeans’ quality of life and overall happiness.

Beside Dr Chee, the SDP’s star candidate was Dr Paul Tambyah, an infectious diseases expert and a professor at the Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine.

SDP was the first to hold a lunchtime rally. A sizeable crowd came to see party members speak outside UOB Plaza in Raffles Place on Sept 7. 



I dare say
it's a
one-off.

**SDP chief
Chee Soon Juan on
PAP's landslide win**



Singapore People's Party

Veteran opposition leader Chiam See Tong was one of two opposition voices in Parliament for many years. The party, however, failed to win a single seat in two consecutive elections.



Veteran opposition leader Chiam See Tong and his wife Lina, SPP's candidate for Potong Pasir SMC, at a rally on Sept 4, 2015.

ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

Vote SPP

Singapore People's Party (SPP)

Seats contested: 8

Wards contested: 4

GRC: Bishan-Toa Payoh

SMC: Hong Kah North, Mountbatten, Potong Pasir

Vote share (in areas contested): 27.1 per cent



SPP members cheer with party founder Chiam See Tong (seated) at the rally for Bishan-Toa Payoh GRC on Sept 5, 2015. ST PHOTO: CHONG JUN LIANG

Shea Driscoll

This election saw Potong Pasir - helmed by Mr Chiam See Tong for 27 years till 2011 - fall further out of the Singapore People's Party's reach.

Its candidate Mrs Lina Chiam, the wife of Mr Chiam, lost in the ward with 33.6 per cent of votes.

The PAP's Mr Sitoh Yih Pin pulled off a convincing win of 66.4 per cent in the ward this election, improving significantly on his wafer-thin margin of 0.7 percentage points in 2011.

This also means Mrs Lina Chiam will lose her Non-Constituency MP seat in Parliament.

The party was also the opposition party which saw the largest swing against it.

Its vote share of 27.1 per cent was 14.3 percentage points lower than its 2011 result of 41.4 per cent.

For the first time in 39 years, Mr Chiam, SPP's secretary-general, did not contest the general election.

The 80-year-old has had two strokes, and has difficulty moving around, but still spoke at rallies, and was greeted enthusiastically at each of his public appearances.

Of its eight candidates this election, four were recently from other parties. Mountbatten SMC candidate Jeannette Chong-Aruldoss and Hong Kah North SMC candidate Ravi Philemon were formerly of the National Solidarity Party.

Days before Nomination Day, SPP unveiled a team that included two members of the Democratic Progressive Party, who had quit DPP to join SPP so they could contest - Mr Benjamin Pwee and Mr Hamim Aliyas.

It also made the unusual move of having separate manifestos for each of the four wards it contested. 



National Solidarity Party

Led by Mr Sebastian Teo, the party started in 1987 has not won a seat in Parliament before. This election saw a decline in its number of candidates and vote share.



NSP chairman Sebastian Teo speaks during the rally in Circuit Road on Sept 7, 2015.
ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

National Solidarity Party (NSP)

Seats contested: 12

Wards contested: 4

GRC: Tampines, Sembawang

SMC: MacPherson, Pioneer

Vote share (in areas contested): 25.3 per cent



NSP candidates on stage at the rally in Ngee Ann Secondary School on Sept 9, 2015.
PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI FOR THE STRAITS TIMES

The National Solidarity Party was mired in controversy this election - flip-flopping on where it was going to contest and switching secretary-generals mid-election season.

The party announced its candidates only on Nomination Day, and launched a five-page manifesto on its website a day after.

Earlier, it made two U-turns on whether it would contest Marine Parade GRC and MacPherson SMC, prompting then acting secretary-general Hazel Poa to quit the party. Her replacement, legal consultant Lim Tean, was the fifth secretary-general of the party since the 2011 election.

The party, which campaigned with the slogan "Singaporeans deserve better", proposed that Singaporeans be allowed to buy their first HDB flat at cost, and also be allowed to buy another resale flat.

It also proposed to impose quotas on foreign PMETs seeking employment in Singapore.

The 12 candidates it fielded in four wards was half that of its 2011 slate, when it got 39.3 of votes in the areas it contested. Its vote share fell to 25.3 per cent this election.

It fielded one of the youngest candidates in this election: 26-year-old Kevryn Lim, who revealed on Nomination Day that she is a single mother.

NSP's Mr Cheo Chai Chen, who was in a three-cornered fight in MacPherson SMC, lost his deposit, polling only 0.8 per cent against PAP's Ms Tin Pei Ling (65.6 per cent) and WP's Mr Bernard Chen (33.6 per cent). 



Singaporeans First

The year-old party is led by ex-presidential candidate Tan Jee Say. This election was a disappointing foray for the party, which is vocal about the influx of foreigners into Singapore.



SingFirst founder and chairman Tan Jee Say speaks to supporters in Queenstown Stadium at the rally on Sept 9, 2015.

ST PHOTO: YEO KAI WEN

Singaporeans First (SingFirst)

Seats contested: 10

Wards contested: 2

GRC: Jurong, Tanjong Pagar

Vote share (in areas contested): 21.5 per cent



The SingFirst candidates for Tanjong Pagar GRC (from left): Mr Chirag Desai, Mr Fahmi Rais, Mr Tan Jee Say, Dr Ang Yong Guan and Mr Melvyn Chiu. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

Chew Hui Min

The Singaporeans First party was contesting an election for the first time, having been formed in August 2014.

Its secretary-general Tan Jee Say ran in Holland-Bukit Timah GRC in the 2011 election as an SDP candidate, and also ran in the 2011 Presidential Election, coming third with 25 per cent in a four-cornered race.

This election, Mr Tan led a team of five to stand in Tanjong Pagar, giving the ward its first contest since 1991, when it was expanded into a GRC.

It garnered a vote share of 21.5 per cent in Jurong and Tanjong Pagar, the two wards it contested.

The party was vocal about the influx of foreigners into Singapore although it said the party was not anti-foreigners, and it proposed a \$6 billion social safety net plan in its manifesto.

Its campaign slogan was "Restore our nation".

Its all-male Tanjong Pagar GRC team included another familiar face, psychiatrist Ang Yong Guan who also contested in Holland-Bukit Timah in 2011. 

Hear the SingFirst chant which has a Riverdance feel to it.





Reform Party

Started by the late opposition firebrand J.B. Jeyaretnam, the party is now led by his son Kenneth Jeyaretnam. It made headlines for its choice of candidates, but ended up with the lowest vote share among the parties.



RP secretary-general Kenneth Jeyaretnam speaks at the rally for Radin Mas SMC at Delta Hockey Pitch on Sept 6, 2015.
ST PHOTO: DESMOND WEE

Reform Party (RP)

Seats contested: 11

Wards contested: 3

GRC: Ang Mo Kio, West Coast

SMC: Radin Mas

Vote share (in areas contested): 20.6 per cent



RP candidates are unveiled in front of a hair salon in Ang Mo Kio Avenue 1. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO

Shea Driscoll

The Reform Party fielded 11 candidates in this election, taking on the PAP team for Ang Mo Kio GRC helmed by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, and the PAP's West Coast team led by Trade and Industry Minister Lim Hng Kiang and Minister in the Prime Minister's Office S. Iswaran.

In Radin Mas SMC, Mr Kumar Appavoo faced a three-cornered fight against the PAP's Mr Sam Tan and independent candidate Han Hui Hui.

It was the worst-performing opposition party of this election with 20.6 per cent of the votes in the areas it contested.

RP's vote share in 2011 was 31.8 per cent.

The party campaigned on social spending policies, pledging to give \$300 a month to every child under the age of 18, \$500 a month in pensions to those above 65 and abolishing MediShield Life premiums for these groups.

Candidates also called for the return of CPF funds at age 55, a minimum wage, a decrease in immigration to Singapore and the shortening of National Service to one year.

For 2015, the RP made headlines for picking some candidates who had been in the news .

They included blogger Roy Ngerng, who had been successfully sued by PM Lee for defamation for suggesting that he had misappropriated CPF savings, and lawyer M. Ravi, who had represented Mr Ngerng until he was suspended over concerns about his mental health.

Another candidate was activist Gilbert Goh, who had organised protests in Hong Lim Park over CPF and immigration issues.

All three men were part of the Ang Mo Kio GRC team. In the end, it won 21.4 per cent against Mr Lee's team. 



Singapore Democratic Alliance

A coalition that started with four parties in 2001.
It is now down to two parties, and is led by
Mr Desmond Lim.



SDA leader
Desmond Lim at
the rally opposite
Buangkok MRT
station on Sept 8,
2015.

PHOTO: LIANHE ZAOBAO

Singapore Democratic Alliance (SDA)

Seats contested: 6

Wards contested: 1

GRC: Pasir Ris-Punggol

Vote share (in areas contested): 27.1 per cent



SDA's candidate for Pasir Ris-Punggol Harminder Pal Singh speaks at the rally in Pasir Ris Park on Sept 5, 2015. ST PHOTO: NEO XIAOBIN

Six candidates – that was the size of the Singapore Democratic Alliance’s slate of candidates at this year’s polls, its smallest ever since debuting at the 2001 General Election.

Party chief Desmond Lim Bak Chuan gave up trying to win a seat in Punggol East SMC, having won just 4.45 per cent of the votes in 2011. The party as a whole did not do much better that year, finishing as the worst-performing of the lot, with 30.1 per cent of the vote.

Mr Lim again stood in the Punggol East by-election in 2013 but garnered only 0.57 per cent of the vote.

This time, he led a six-man team fighting in the party’s sole battleground, Pasir Ris-Punggol GRC.

At the party’s first rally, chief media officer and candidate Harminder Pal Singh called for greater choice for Singaporeans in managing their CPF savings, while an online manifesto tackled issues like the Population White Paper and healthcare costs.

Its campaign slogan was “A heart for the people”. 



People's Power Party

The youngest political party in Singapore was less than five months old when it contested the election. It is led by veteran opposition politician Goh Meng Seng.



PPP secretary-general Goh Meng Seng at a rally in Bukit Gombak Stadium on Sept 4, 2015.

ST PHOTO: DESMOND LIM

People's Power Party (PPP)

Seats contested: 4

Wards contested: 1

GRC: Chua Chu Kang

Vote share (in areas contested): 23.1 per cent



PPP candidates for Chua Chu Kang (from left) Syafarin Sarif, Goh Meng Seng, Low Wai Choo and Lee Tze Shih chant on Nomination Day. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG

Shea Driscoll

The youngest party in the 2015 General Election was helmed by veteran opposition politician Goh Meng Seng, formerly of the National Solidarity Party and the Workers' Party.

He had registered the People's Power Party earlier in 2015 and fielded just four candidates, including himself.

The party's slate was so small it did not qualify for a party political message on television and radio.

Contesting in Chua Chu Kang GRC, the PPP team lost to a PAP team led by Health Minister Gan Kim Yong. It polled 23.1 per cent of the valid votes.

At election rallies, the PPP had focused on foreigners and healthcare. Mr Goh said that the party was not anti-foreigner

but against the "PAP's ruthless population growth policy". The party's campaign slogan was "Securing our Future".

Apart from Mr Goh, managing consultant Syafarin Sarif would have been familiar to political watchers. He stood in Tampines GRC under the NSP banner in 2011. 



Supporters of PPP with its founder, Mr Goh Meng Seng (far right), at Chua Chu Kang Primary School on Nomination Day.

ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG



The Voters



Rallygoers look on as PAP candidates for Aljunied GRC address the crowd in Defu Lane on Sept 4, 2015. ST PHOTO: BASIL EDWARD TEO



Supporters of SDP passing a giant inflatable ball thrown into the crowd at the party's rally in Woodlands Stadium on Sept 8, 2015. ST PHOTO: DESMOND LIM



A blue neon-lit hammer - the symbol of the Workers' Party - lights up as supporters watch a WP rally from the corridors of an HDB block beside a field at Simei Road, which is in East Coast GRC, on Sept 6, 2015. ST PHOTO: DESMOND LIM



Children holding SingFirst flags and clappers at the rally in Queenstown Stadium on Sept 9, 2015.
ST PHOTO: YEO KAI WEN



Eight-month-old Emma Ingkiriwang, her father Ryan and mother Fiona, both 31, wear homemade outfits printed with the PAP's party logo at the rally for Aljunied GRC in Defu Lane on Sept 4, 2015.

ST PHOTO: MARK CHOENG



Supporters hold up a drawing of PM Lee Hsien Loong and a figurine of founding Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew at a PAP lunchtime rally at the promenade area beside UOB Plaza on Sept 8, 2015.

ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG



A WP supporter with two inflatable toy hammers - the party's symbol - at its rally in Simei Road on Sept 6, 2015. ST PHOTO: DESMOND LIM



A WP supporter in the party's colours and wearing party lights at a rally for Aljunied GRC in Serangoon Stadium on Sept 8, 2015. ST PHOTO: ALPHONSUS CHERN



Supporters with party flags at the PAP rally for East Coast GRC in Simei Road on Sept 9, 2015.
ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG



East Coast GRC resident Mohamad Rashid, 65, straps a Workers' Party pamphlet to his head and cheers for the party while being greeted by East Coast GRC candidate Dr Daniel Goh (background) and other party members at a food centre in Bedok South Road during a walkabout on Sept 6, 2015. ST PHOTO: MARK CHEONG



A group of supporters made posters of WWE wrestler Triple H - a pun on independent candidate Han Hui Hui's initials - during her maiden campaign rally at Delta Hockey Pitch in Tiong Bahru Road.

TNP PHOTO: AZIM AZMAN



A WP supporter wearing a mask of Optimus Prime, a character from Transformers, at a rally at Bedok Stadium on Sept 9, 2015. A prime mover with a 20-foot container emblazoned with the WP logo and slogan was spotted at rally sites and netizens dubbed it "Optimus Prime". ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



A supporter flying the flag of the NSP at a rally held in Tampines Street 81 on Sept 5, 2015.

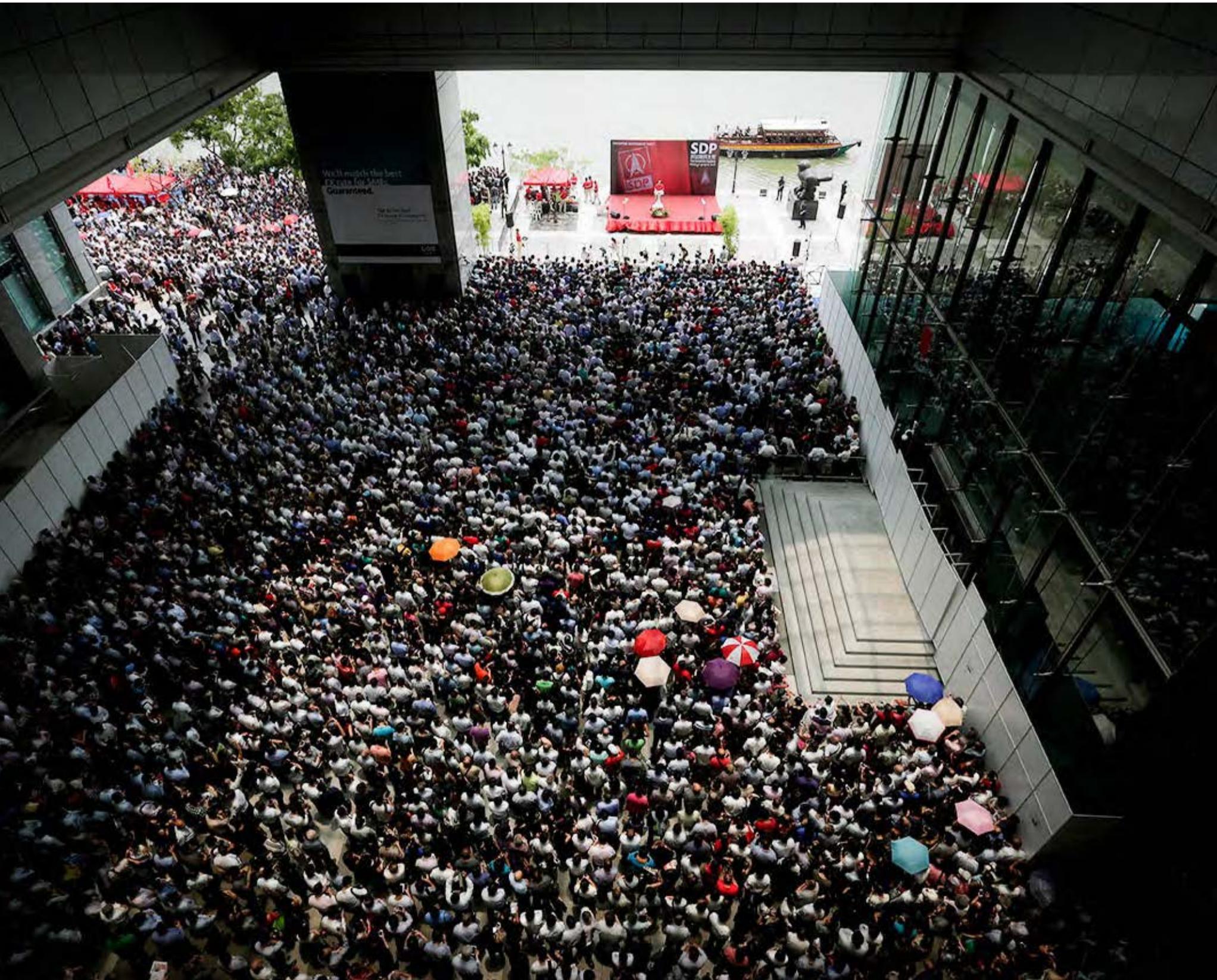
ST PHOTO: JAMIE KOH



A neon-lit hammer and a sign with the words "ay sai" (Hokkien for "can") at a WP election rally in Punggol Field Walk on Sept 5, 2015. ST PHOTO: DESMOND FOO



SDP supporters with cheering sticks at the party's rally for Yuhua SMC in Jurong East Stadium on Sept 6, 2015. ST PHOTO: YEO KAI WEN



SDP holds its first lunchtime rally at the promenade area beside UOB Plaza on Sept 7, 2015. ST PHOTO: NEO XIAO BIN



The crowd at a PAP rally beside UOB Plaza on Sept 8, 2015. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG



A supporter holds up a placard with photos of the late Mr Lee Kuan Yew at the PAP lunchtime rally at UOB Plaza on Sept 8, 2015. ST PHOTO: KUA CHEE SIONG



An inflated ball being tossed around at a PAP rally in Yishun Stadium on Sept 8, 2015. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



Residents of all ages attend a rally held by PAP candidate for Potong Pasir SMC Sitoh Yih Pin in Potong Pasir Avenue 1 on Sept 9, 2015. ST PHOTO: LIM SIN THAI



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