One in three voters chose the opposition in this GE. What are the top reasons for people turning against the ruling party? Will future elections see a rise in the proportion of opposition voters? Will the PAP change its strategy to woo them back?

Chua Mui Hoong, Teo Cheng Wee and Samuel Lim report

DESIRE FOR OPPOSITION AN UNSTOPPABLE TIDE?
On May 6, the people spoke at the ballot box in a landslide victory for the Government. And yet, as the dust settles, there are questions about whether the opposition managed to win over voters. While they gave a big boost to the People’s Action Party (PAP), with a 9.4% rise in the percentage of votes it received, it is not enough to encourage the opposition.

PAP, which has won every General Election since independence in 1959, is the dominant party in Singapore. But there have been signs of discontent with the ruling party, especially its handling of estate upgrading and the proposal to raise the Central Provident Fund. This has led to a steady erosion of its majority, with its share of the vote falling from 78.6% in 1984, 75.9% in 1988, to 74.7% in 1991.

In the last General Election in 1991, the PAP was reduced to a minority government after winning 81 of the 84 seats contested in the legislature. Since then, the PAP has been buffeted by reports of party infighting and its approach to estate upgrading has been widely criticized by the opposition.

In this year’s General Election, the PAP’s share of the vote is likely to fall further, as indicated by the results of the 2005 General Election. In that year, the PAP won 70 of the 84 seats contested, with its share of the vote falling to 70.3% from 73.9% in 1991. This is roughly the proportion of the votes in wards they contested; by contrast, there are signals that voters have consistently punished the PAP for its stance on estate upgrading and its failure to address the needs of the people.

The ruling party also tossed up suggestions to create a shadow of opposition, if not to support the ruling party. But in most wards, the PAP lost ground, as indicated by the results of the General Election.

The election result shows that the PAP has not managed to do better, despite its strong economic performance, and also its efforts to address the needs of the people. The PAP has made efforts to address the needs of the people, but it has not been successful in doing so.

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