GE: PAP's manifesto emphasises inclusiveness, say observers

By Hoe Yeen Nie | Posted: 17 April 2011 2136 hrs

SINGAPORE: Observers have said the People's Action Party's (PAP) manifesto places more emphasis on inclusiveness this time round.

They said the document falls short of spelling out policy targets and details, which may leave some voters wanting more.

The PAP's manifesto lays out the party's broad goals for the next few years.

And this time, observers note a bigger emphasis on the message of inclusion.

One reason is that it is one way to manage the fault lines that may appear as society becomes more open and complex.

Zulkifli Baharudin, a political observer, said: "There is a fear that some of the population may not find their aspirational goals reflected in the PAP, and therefore, I think PAP has tried very hard to make sure that every segment in society, their aspirations and wishes are reflected in the manifesto."

Observers said some voters may be disappointed that the PAP's 13-page manifesto does not directly address the hot-button issues of the day, such as housing prices and transport. This is in contrast to the manifestos laid out by some of the opposition parties, which have chosen to highlight specific gaps in policy.

Eugene Tan, associate lecturer at the Singapore Management University, notes that "the challenge for the PAP is, how do you craft a manifesto that does suggest that you could have done a lot more in the last 40-odd years? I suspect voters might want more clarity, more detail, instead of a big-picture approach."

But the lack of detail may not be an issue.

Observers said having been in government for over 40 years, the PAP's track record is clear to see.

The challenge instead is for the opposition to show how it can implement what it wants to do.

Mr Zulkifli said: "PAP clearly presents its manifesto knowing very confidently that it will still form the government after the election. It knows the fact that compared to other political parties, PAP has a greater burden that its manifesto will have to be realised in the form of public policies once it gets voted in. In the case of the opposition, certainly that is not the
case. I think they are just trying to provide fodder for more debate during the elections."

So far, the key parties contesting the General Election have unveiled their manifestos, except for the Singapore Democratic Party and National Solidarity Party.