Just over a week ago, Singapore celebrated 50 years of independence over a four-day weekend that culminated in a spectacular National Day Parade at the Padang. Hot on the heels of that, Singapore began preparing for the next big thing – the General Election.

Against this backdrop, Singapore-based socio-political site Inconvenient Questions held a forum Friday to ask thought-leaders on what SG50 really means to voters in the upcoming polls.

The panelists were National University of Singapore (NUS) professor and Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy dean Kishore Mahbubani, Singapore Management University (SMU) associate professor and Wee Kim Wee Center director Dr Kirpal Singh, architect and NUS School of Architecture adjunct professor Tay Kheng Soon, and National Volunteer and Philanthropy Centre CEO Melissa Kwee.

What will be focus of next GE?

IQs' editor-in-chief and forum moderator Viswa Sadasivan brought up the issue of how Singaporeans would vote in the next election. He asked whether Singaporeans would continue to put a lot more emphasis on bread and butter issues or put more emphasis on issues such as fairness and justice. As seen from the video below, a member of the audience replied, saying that he believed that Singaporeans have "evolved from the basics". When prodded, he also believed citizens will focus on more "complex" issues in the next polls.
A member of the audience added that Singapore needed to be a more compassionate society, adding that politicians should share what they have contributed rather than simply talking about what they plan to do.

**Lack of engagement?**

Also, the government should engage the community more, according to some participants. Kwee noted, “I actually don’t want to just hear how they are going to solve our problems. In fact, I want to know how they are going to involve me, because I want to be part of the solution.”

She added that many issues today cannot be solved by the government alone.

Issues surrounding education were also highlighted, and Tay said they was a “systemic” problem in Singapore in that many voices were not being accommodated.

He cited one example wherein ideas that about 50 school principals and teachers came up with in a conference were brought to the Ministry of Education and dismissed. The educators were called "presumptuous".

“If you are not in the 'in' group, your voice is immaterial,” Tay noted.

The one-and-a-half hour forum saw a variety of opinions, but ended with one unifying point everyone agreed upon, which was their “love” for Singapore.

As Viswa Sadasivan said, “We all disagreed, and agreed. And we’re not uncomfortable with that.”