

ELECTIONS UNLIKELY TO BE CALLED NEXT YEAR, SAY POLITICAL WATCHERS

SDP to begin election preparations next month

There are signs polls will be held at end of next year, says opposition party

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SINGAPORE – The Singapore Democratic Party (SDP) announced yesterday that it would launch its preparations next month for the coming General Election, two years before the elections are due.

“There are indications that PM Lee Hsien Loong will call for elections in 2015 ... Depending on circumstances, Mr Lee may call for one as early as the second quarter of 2015,” the SDP said on its website.

“It is, therefore, not early at all for the SDP to step up our campaign and prepare ourselves for the much-anticipated contest.”

However, political watchers whom TODAY spoke to felt it was unlikely for the General Election to be called that early.

Former Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP) Siew Kum Hong noted that certain processes, such as the formation of the electoral boundaries committee, have not even begun.

He added that early-2016 would still be a good window for the ruling People Action's Party (PAP) to tap the goodwill generated by the SG50 celebrations next year.

Singapore Management University law lecturer Eugene Tan also predicted that the General Election would be held in the first quarter of 2016, when the “feel-good effect” would still be lingering. “The longer runway will give the ruling party the opportunity to present as best a report as it can when it goes to the polls,” he said.

Associate Professor Tan added that should the General Election be called next year, it is unlikely to be held in the first nine months of next year as it “may not go down well with voters because they might see the PAP as seeking to capitalise on the likely feel-good mood that would accompany Singapore's 50th anniversary celebrations”.

Still, the political watchers felt that it is timely for the SDP to ramp up its preparations.

Unlike the Workers' Party, the SDP and the other opposition parties have a lower profile because they lack parliamentary presence, said Assoc Prof Tan, making it important for these parties to start their campaigns sooner rather than later.

Mr Siew noted that the opposition parties have been accused of being idle between elections.

“All political parties should always be active ... even if there's no immediate prospect of elections,” he said.

Assoc Prof Tan added: “Parties

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Mr Siew Kum Hong
FORMER NOMINATED MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

will have to start as early as they can because in the constituency they want to contest, they would want to have a sense of whether voters there are receptive to that particular party.”

The SDP said on its website that it has been “hard at work conducting

(its) ground campaign and drawing up alternative policies”.

“We are now at the stage where we need to effectively communicate our policies.

“If we wait until the elections are announced before we start increas-

ing the tempo, it will be too late and we will have lost the battle,” it added.

Next year marks the 35th anniversary of the SDP. A series of activities will be organised to commemorate the occasion and complement its election campaign, the SDP said.