

Voter threats in new political reality

BY ADRIAN LIM

A RESIDENT who says he did not get a personal response from his Member of Parliament (MP) has issued a veiled threat not to vote for him in the next General Election (GE).

Such reactions indicate just how demanding the electorate in Singapore has become, said political observers and some MPs themselves.

In a Facebook posting on Saturday, Acting Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin addressed the veiled threat from a resident in his Marine Parade constituency.

The individual in question posted online: "I wrote to Tan Chuan Jin as a concern (sic) resident of Geylang Serai about a month ago, until now no reply. But every day, he update (sic) his Facebook page. Well, so much for my vote come GE2016."

Associate Professor Eugene Tan of the Singapore Management University said that Singaporeans have always been demanding of their politicians.

But what has changed from

"There will be those who get angry because they want a personal response from me. And this even after my colleagues have responded. Threats like this one, though not frequent, do pop up, particularly online."

ACTING MANPOWER MINISTER TAN CHUAN-JIN



the last GE in 2011 is the "belief that they can exert greater demands...through threatening to use their vote", noted Prof Tan.

This is due to the more "competitive political landscape" Singapore is now in.

He said that at the constituency level, more seats may fall to the opposition in the next GE if there is a 5 to 10 per cent shift against the People's Action Party (PAP).

With the PAP taking some blows in the last GE, some voters may be trying to take advantage of this "perceived electoral vul-

nerability", he said.

Ms Belinda Ang, the founder of thinkBIG Communications, acknowledges that the political landscape has changed but also points out that technology and social media have made politicians more "accessible".

In some way, social media has also amplified what she believes is Singaporeans' habit of expecting the Government and politicians to solve their problems.

MP for Tampines GRC Baey Yam Keng said that residents sometimes tend to see their MPs as a "one-stop" resource for all

their needs.

Mr Baey said that he receives up to 20 e-mail messages every day from residents in his constituency.

He said "the system must work" and residents should be able to get what they need directly from the relevant government agencies and town councils, with an MP stepping in for additional recourse or appeals.

Chua Chu Kang GRC MP Za-qi Mohamad said it is a "24 by 7 job" and reveals that he has to deal with residents' e-mail messages even while on vacation.

In his Facebook posting over the weekend, Mr Tan said that "threats like this crop up every now and then", and particularly in the online space.

He also gave a thorough explanation of how messages get to him through various channels, such as e-mail and Facebook, and how they are followed up on.

"There will be those who get angry because they want a personal response from me. And this even after my colleagues have responded," wrote Mr Tan.

He said he will try his best to engage and listen to everyone, but he hopes people will understand that he will be unable to meet the expectations of some.

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HELP DESK 我的字典

Electorate: 选民 xuǎn mǐn

Politicians: 政治家 zhèng zhì jiā

Recourse: 求助 qiú zhù

Expectations: 期望 qī wàng