

# Will AIM saga be aired during Punggol East by-election?

**SINGAPORE** – Workers’ Party Chairman Sylvia Lim yesterday withdrew an adjournment motion on safeguarding public interest in the management of town councils, which she had filed with regard to the PAP town councils’ controversial sale of management software to a PAP-owned company, Action Information Management (AIM).

The move came two days after Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong announced that he had asked the Ministry of National Development (MND) to review the transaction. Among other things, the review will re-examine the fundamental nature of town councils, after much public debate about whether the town councils are public institutions or political organisations.

Ms Lim had filed the motion for next Monday’s Parliament sitting. By filing the motion, she would have initiated a debate on the topic.

Analysts said that Ms Lim’s withdrawal of the adjournment motion al-

lows the WP to raise the issue during the Punggol East by-election, rather than provide the PAP Government with a chance to address it in Parliament next week.

Explaining why she withdrew the motion — which was filed hours before Mr Lee’s announcement, Ms Lim referred to the MND review: “Given this latest, welcome development, I believe the goal of protecting the public and residents’ interests would be better served if the government investigation and review were to first proceed.”

Adding that the WP-run Aljunied-Hougang Town Council is ready to provide its inputs to MND for the review, Ms Lim added: “After the completion of the review and the publication of its findings, the matter can be raised in Parliament again as the circumstances require.”

Describing the withdrawal as “a pre-emptive move” by the WP, Singapore Management University Assistant Professor Eugene Tan said it “pre-



Even if the WP were to raise the issue in Parliament or during the Punggol East by-election, the PM can say that we should wait for the investigation to take its due course.

**Dr Lam Peng Er**  
SENIOR RESEARCH  
FELLOW AT EAST  
ASIAN INSTITUTE

vents a tentative closure on the issue”.

He said: “If the adjournment goes on this coming Monday, and the Government gives its reply, there’s a chance that they could take away a lot of the unanswered questions... It keeps this issue very alive and it also means that the WP can leverage on it during the hustlings.”

While he added that the WP will have the biggest claim on the issue, other opposition parties will also use it as a leverage to press home the necessity of a multi-party Parliament in order for the “PAP government to be held in check”.

Former Nominated MP Siew Kum Hong concurred and felt that the opposition parties will certainly raise the issue during the by-election rallies, to argue for the “importance of having opposition in Parliament”.

So far, the WP, the Singapore Democratic Party (SDP), the Reform Party (RP) and the Singapore Democratic Alliance (SDA) have expressed inter-

est in contesting the by-election.

The WP, SDP and RP did not reply to queries on whether they plan to bring up the issue. But SDA Secretary-General Desmond Lim would not rule out the possibility. “We will raise any issue... that affects the people of Singapore,” he said.

East Asian Institute Senior Research Fellow Lam Peng Er felt Mr Lee’s move to review the transaction would take the sting off the Opposition’s rhetoric.

Speaking before Ms Lim withdrew the adjournment motion, Dr Lam said: “I suspect that it is not a coincidence that the snap by-election was announced just a day after the PM declared that the MND will investigate the AIM saga.

“Even if the WP were to raise the issue in Parliament or during the Punggol East by-election, the PM can say that we should wait for the investigation to take its due course.”

**WOOSIAN BOON**