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THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

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## Election battle-map unveiled

BY RACHEL CHAN

THE battle lines have been drawn.

The Electoral Boundaries Review Committee yesterday announced that there will be 27 electoral divisions in the upcoming general election (GE), up from 23 in the previous GE held in 2006.

There has also been an 8.9 per cent increase in the number of voters, from 2,158,704 recorded in 2006 to 2,350,257 as of Feb 22.

The upcoming elections will have 12 Single Member Constituencies (SMC) and 15 Group Representation Constituencies (GRCs).

Parliament will also have a total of 87 seats, up from 84, making it the highest number to be contested since Singapore's independence.

The 12 SMCs will be upped from the nine in the previous GE. With the exception of Hougang, Potong Pasir, Joo Chiat and Bukit Panjang, the other eight SMCs have been newly carved from a mixture of what were formerly five-member and six-member GRCs.

In 2009, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in Parliament that there would be fewer six-member GRCs at the next election. This is because too many six-member GRCs makes it harder for voters to identify with the whole slate of Mem-

bers of Parliament (MPs), Mr Lee had said. For instance, the five-member Hong Kah GRC will be dissolved.

In its place, Hong Kah North SMC will be formed while other districts will be absorbed by the newly delineated Chua Chu Kang GRC and Pioneer SMC.

Ang Mo Kio and Pasir Ris-Punggol GRCs are the only six-member GRCs. Holland-Bukit Timah GRC will be downsized from a five-member team to a four-member one. The boundaries of the other four-member GRC - Moulmein-Kallang - will be carved afresh from Tanjong Pagar GRC and Jalan Besar GRC.

Some electoral divisions will be subsumed into other GRCs.

For example, the districts currently under MacPherson SMC will now come under Marine Parade GRC.

When asked about the implications of these changes, political observer Eugene Tan pointed out that there will be up to 105 MPs in the next Parliament, including nine Nominated MPs, and up to nine Non-Constituency MPs.

"We can expect a more vibrant Parliament," said the law lecturer at the Singapore Management University.

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## MRT ridership to work rose in last 10 years

BY KENNY CHEE

WHILE more Singapore residents were taking trains to work instead of just relying on buses in the past 10 years, the percentage travelling by car remained about the same, based on Department of Statistics figures released yesterday.

Census of Population 2010 data showed that the percentage of Singapore citizens and permanent residents, aged 15 years and above, taking only public buses to work fell from 25 per cent in 2000 to 19.3 per cent last year.

But the percentage of those commuting only by MRT, or by train and another mode of transport, rose from 23.6 per cent in 2000 to 31.2 per cent last year.

Associate Professor Lee Der-Hong, a transport researcher at the National University of Singapore (NUS), attributed the rise in MRT-related ridership to the opening of more MRT lines and train stations, which gave commuters greater convenience.

The MRT penetration also means that some bus services were either dropped or rerouted. This probably led to many bus commuters switching to train, he said.

The surprise finding was the slight rise in those travelling by car only - from 23.7 per cent in 2000 to 24.8 per cent last year.

Assistant Professor Paul Barter, of NUS' Lee Kuan Yew

School of Public Policy, expects car ridership to grow further.

This is because the car population here rose by more than 50 per cent from 2000 to 595,185 last year, LTA figures showed.

Prof Lee said Electronic Road Pricing (ERP) could have been effective in discouraging people from driving to work. "People like to buy cars, but many don't like to drive to work because ERP adds to car-usage costs," he said.

The census data also showed that the median work-travel times for residents in many parts of the north - including Woodlands, Sembawang and Yishun - were 40-45min. This was higher than the 30-35min travel times for those living elsewhere.

Dr Barter said one reason is that a large proportion of jobs are in the central region and the west, so many in the north have to travel longer to work.

But this may change. An Urban Redevelopment Authority spokesman said the agency is "growing the established industrial estates in Yishun and opening new industrial areas in Woodlands and Sembawang".

Prof Lee said the north also has fewer road and train choices for residents than other parts of Singapore, but the upcoming Thomson MRT Line and North-South Expressway could help improve accessibility.

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## That's 'Gaddafi' on fire

LIBYAN protesters standing atop a damaged police station as they burned an effigy of Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi during a protest in Tobruk, Libya, on Wednesday. (PHOTO: AP)

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