

**REFORM PARTY UNVEILS SLATE FOR ANG MO KIO GRC**

The Reform Party (RP) presented its candidates for a return challenge in Ang Mo Kio GRC, where they had garnered 30.7 per cent of the votes in GE2011. Four of them, including team leader M Ravi, will be heading into their maiden electoral battle. With the six unveiled yesterday, the RP has presented all the candidates it intends to field in the General Election next month.

**Siva Chandran, 32**  
Information and Communications Technology trainer



**FACT FILE:**

- Diploma in Higher Education in digital film technology accredited by Middlesex University, UK
- Edited Tamil film My Magic, which was nominated for the Palme D'Or

**HE SAID:** "This is where I was born, brought up ... I am not an expert, but I will be truthful ... and do my best for Ang Mo Kio GRC."

**Jesse Loo, 52**  
Former banking executive and an independent financial adviser



**FACT FILE:**

- Holds a Bachelor of Business in Economics, Marketing and Social Asian Politics from Swinburne University of Technology at Melbourne
- Father of two daughters

**HE SAID:** "I hope to bring about a big society where Singaporeans are the master, and where the Government should not be interfering in our private choices."

**M Ravi, 46**  
Lawyer, human rights activist



**FACT FILE:**

- Studied law at the University of Cardiff; admitted to the Singapore Bar in 1997
- Degree in Political Science and Sociology from National University of Singapore
- Represented Opposition political figures and persons on death row, advocate for abolishment of death penalty in Singapore

**HE SAID:** "This election is ... about the entire system of democracy in Singapore."

**Roy Ngerng, 34**  
Socio-political blogger



**FACT FILE:**

- Degree in Sociology from the National University of Singapore
- Former healthcare worker at Tan Tock Seng Hospital
- Former civil servant at Health Promotion Board, where he was named Employee of the Year

**HE SAID:** "I believe that we have a responsibility to speak up for Singaporeans ... to ensure that the poor, the elderly and the weakest members of society are protected."

## Better living standards for Singaporeans

**SINGAPORE** – On his walks around the neighbourhood, what sticks out to Mr Siva Chandran is the number of licensed moneylender businesses he sees.

"We call Singapore a First-World country (so) I will not accept this because I want each and every individual's standard of living to be raised," said the 32-year-old candidate, who is part of a six-man Reform Party team that will contest in Ang Mo Kio GRC.

Mr Siva, who was formerly a manager in a Residents' Committee, said he has come across residents who use pre-paid top-up cards for electricity, but often cannot afford to pay.

"I really felt depressed looking at the (living) conditions of the people. Most of their houses are always in the dark. I think (for) the condition of the people over the years, the rich are getting richer, and the poor are getting poorer."

As someone who grew up in the town, he believes he has the heart to serve residents of the constituency. He added that he takes time out to walk around Teck Ghee, his favourite place in the town, and interacts with residents, offering his help to them, such as filling up forms.

Mr Chandran also believes the processes and systems can be simplified for the elderly.

"I am not an expert in this area, but as long as I have a heart to serve, it is enough. I want to make a difference in these people's lives, (not just) the needy and the seniors," he said. **MARISSA YEO**

## Championing for minimum wage on his agenda

**SINGAPORE** – Noting that he has heard complaints of jobs paying S\$5 per hour, Mr Jesse Loo, who is currently unemployed, said championing for a minimum wage will be on his agenda, should he get elected.

The 52-year-old, who is looking for his maiden electoral battle in Ang Mo Kio GRC next month under the Reform Party banner, said: "I believe that S\$15 per hour should be very normal, not S\$5 per hour. There are some economists who say we should (be at) S\$26 per hour."

Citing the United States' minimum wage (US\$7.25 per hour at the Federal level) for comparison, Mr Loo said "the low-wage income earners (in Singapore) have gone too low for too long".

Apart from minimum wage, issues involving the professional, managerial, executive and technician (PMET) group and the economy are also areas of concern for him.

"Business cost has been too high, and one of the reason is because of the high rental cost," said Mr Loo.

Rental cost should be capped to ease the financial burden of small and medium enterprises, for businesses to stay afloat and be competitive, said the former banker and independent financial adviser.

The father-of-two also thinks the Ministry of Education needs to tweak its curriculum so that students in Singapore can study liberty rights.

He also argued that housing loans take too much away from Central Provident Fund accounts, leaving individuals with too little for their retirement. **MARISSA YEO**

## M Ravi to lead team to contest in Ang Mo Kio

**SINGAPORE** – Recounting difficulties he faced in challenging "unfair laws" in court — citing the death penalty regime and media regulations — lawyer M Ravi said he wants to bring his legal expertise into the legislature to check these laws.

The human rights activist has defended various Opposition political figures and persons on death row — most notably Yong Vui Kong, the first drug-trafficker on death row to be spared the gallows after changes to the mandatory death penalty — before he was suspended from practice earlier this year due to his mental health.

If elected, the 46-year-old wants to call for constitutional reform, an aspect he felt had been "left out of the entire discourse in the elections".

Specifically, Mr Ravi wants the death penalty to be abolished, and regulations against online media relaxed. "It is difficult for the courts to handle some of these issues because they are in the parameters of Parliament ... Given my legal expertise and interest, it is best that I go to Parliament and be an effective check there," he said.

Mr Ravi, who joined the Reform Party last week, is leading its six-man team to contest in Ang Mo Kio. "We are a mixed team of activists ... We are ordinary Singaporeans and we can understand ordinary Singaporeans," he said. Mr Ravi said he chose to contest under the RP banner because he saw its founder JB Jeyaretnam as an inspiration. "He inspired me to do what is right in the legal arena. Why Ang Mo Kio? This is the last place that (JB Jeyaretnam) fought in the General Election (GE)," he said, referring to the late founder of the RP who fought but lost in Cheng San GRC in the 1997 GE on a Workers' Party ticket.

Acknowledging that fighting for a ward helmed by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong "will not be easy", Mr Ravi said his team is not daunted. "We are here for the challenge." **KELLY NG**

## Speaking up for down-trodden Singaporeans

**SINGAPORE** – Having gained prominence for speaking up on issues related to the Central Provident Fund (CPF) system, blogger Roy Ngerng hopes to get a seat in Parliament to speak up for "down-trodden Singaporeans" such as the elderly who have to work into their old age.

Arguing that the CPF system is not adequate for Singaporeans, the 34-year-old blogger said he wants to ask for greater transparency and accountability on the system.

"A responsible government is a government that ensures (people) have enough funds in the CPF to retire ... No one can be a check on themselves. We will be a check for the people," Mr Ngerng said, referring to Emeritus Senior Minister Goh Chok Tong's comment earlier this week that the PAP government was its "own check".

Another group of Singaporeans he wants to help, said Mr Ngerng, are low-income patients he has encountered while working in a hospital, who have stopped tapping Medifund because of cumbersome application processes.

"Singapore is one of the richest (countries) in the world by national wealth. So, it does not make sense that there are so many low-income Singaporeans who cannot retire today," he said.

Mr Ngerng, who had been found by the High Court to have defamed Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong over one of his blog posts on the CPF system, said he saw no issue about being pitted against Mr Lee in Ang Mo Kio.

"We are taking this fight very seriously. We do respect the Prime Minister for what he has done ... But, we want the voters to have a fair chance in selecting people whom they think can represent them," he added.

Mr Ngerng, who was officially accepted as a member of the Reform Party this month, said the party's team has "shown track record". "What is unique about this team is that we have spoken up for Singaporeans over the past few years ... We do not believe in waiting for things to change, we believe in changing things," he said.

**KELLY NG.**

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**Corrections**

● Our headline and story on the National Day Rally public forum organised by REACH misquoted Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Vivian Balakrishnan (“Don’t be seduced by notion politicians can work without incentives: Vivian; Aug 28). He did not use the word “incentives” when responding to a participant’s question on a Member of Parliament’s annual allowance. Dr Balakrishnan had said: “Tell me who can afford to work for you for zero. There are people who can afford to work for you ... apparently at zero. There are two kinds of people who can provide you services apparently at zero. Number 1: I’m already very rich. My bank account is full. I come back, I tell you I want to serve. Other kind of person: Why will that person actually cost more? The word is called corruption. That’s the word.” We apologise for the errors.

# Missing in the election discourse: The economy

FROM KWAN JIN YAO

With the General Election imminent, political parties are preparing for their campaigns and their candidates have raised a plethora of issues, including, but not limited to housing and public transportation, healthcare and retirement policies for an ageing population, as well as the perennial concerns over immigration, education and civil society in Singapore.

However, missing in this discourse is the issue of the economy and its long-term implications, even though it has dominated headlines of late.

As a result of global circumstances — such as the corrections to the Chinese stock market and the devaluation of the Chinese yuan — Singapore has slashed the upper end of its annual growth forecast from between 2 and 4 per cent to between 2 and 2.5 per cent.

Worryingly, trade-dependent manufacturing activity has declined with the contraction of the economy in the second quarter, and according to Bloomberg, the 9 per cent slide of the Straits Times Index this year has made it the worst-performing stock index in the developed world after Greece.

These trends should worry the average Singaporean, especially with less-than-optimistic forecasts for the second half of the year. Not to mention those who wish to be elected into office to assume these roles and responsibilities.

Individuals cite the oft-mentioned problems of “the low labour productivity, the high unit labour cost, and business cost of manufacturing”. However, few candidates have broached the topic, and even fewer have mooted credible recommendations. How will SkillsFuture affect levels of productivity? Will growth in wages keep pace with rising costs of living? What is the



Gross domestic product and economic growth have featured heavily in the narrative of Singapore. These issues should be discussed more proactively. TODAY FILE PHOTO

broader trajectory for the country? It may be true that Singapore has limited control over developments abroad, although that would also suggest the importance of reactive plans and more elaborate conversations about the future.

Gross domestic product and economic growth have featured heavily in the narrative of Singapore — it determines the salaries or bonuses of civil servants, for instance, and is often cited as evidence of the country’s success. These issues should be discussed more proactively.

In the context of an election, it would therefore be a good measure of the candidate’s potential as a parliamentarian, with opportunities to go beyond the tired spiels of “voting for change” or the same convenient issues again.

# Father’s role in parenting a child cannot be replicated

FROM SHELEN ANG.

Head, Research and Development,  
Focus on the Family Singapore

The Government’s move to double paternity leave to two weeks is “a gentle nudge for fathers to rethink their role, and see it in a different light”, said Dr Kang Soon-Hock, head of Social Science Core at SIM University (“Enhancements a welcome move, could urge change in attitudes, say observers”; Aug 24).

We agree with Dr Kang’s observation that Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong’s announcement brings to the fore the crucial role fathers play.

According to Erik Erikson, a pioneer in the world of child psychology, a father’s role in parenting a child cannot be replicated by anyone else.

Dads have a huge influence on the emotional and intellectual growth of their children.

Numerous studies have shown that fathers play, communicate and discipline differently.

Fathering experts assert that, in so doing, they build confidence in the child, prepare them for the real world and provide healthy male role models for them to look up to.

Girls who have fathers who are not only committed to their mothers and family, but are also involved, are more likely to have healthier relationships with the opposite sex because they learn from their fathers how men should act towards women.

Boys who grow up with present fathers are less inclined towards acts of violence.

Sociologist David Popenoe explains that when dads are involved, they bring positive benefits to their children that no one else is likely to bring, and that dads are far more than just “second adults” at home.

It has been encouraging to see more fathers becoming increasingly involved in their children’s lives since the start of our local Dads for Life movement.

We strongly urge fathers to continue connecting with their children at the various life stages and to continue equipping themselves with the many resources available, be it online or books, talks and workshops.

The recent move by the Government certainly bodes well for the future of our children.

# Taking the bus with dangerous drivers stressful for seniors

FROM FRANCIS CHOWDHURIE

It is heartening to note that Senior Minister of State for Transport and Finance Josephine Teo is looking at ways to make it easier and less stressful for seniors to travel on public transport (“Senior-friendly enhancements to public transport system in the works”; Aug 21).

To make this a reality, all these enhancements must take into consideration safety issues.

I note that it was not mentioned whether the feedback gathered from the sample survey of seniors included how stressful and dangerous it is for many of us seniors when we take a bus, because of the dangerous way some bus captains drive.

At times, we have to hang on for dear life as drivers speed and jerk to a stop, and passengers are flung around.

And drivers sometimes stop too far from the curb, posing difficulty

for seniors with mobility problems when getting on and off a bus.

Many of us face these problems day after day, and some have the scars to prove it. Was this not raised as an issue when the focus group survey was conducted? Are there statistics available on how many have suffered injuries while taking a bus in Singapore?

The Land Transport Authority and public transport operators should keep an eye on this issue.