

Voter change of mood: Lee Kuan Yew

Loss of one GRC not a disaster, much will depend on performance of opposition, says Lee Kuan Yew

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SINGAPORE – Former Minister Mentor Lee Kuan Yew does not think a more populist form of government would have to emerge as a result of the general election in May.

Replying to questions on Singapore's political scene at the Russia-Singapore Business Forum yesterday, Mr Lee said losing one Group Representation Constituency (GRC) is not a disaster for the country. He believes it's a change in mood among the electorate and much will depend on the performance of the opposition.

Mr Lee said the electorate has decided to bring competition to the political scene and, unless the competition is good, he does not think the trend would continue.

He added an opposition victory in an area is not a given, and it would depend on how the opposition behaves and how the Government responds.

Immigration was another issue that surfaced, with a businessman at the forum lamenting about the difficulty of applying for Permanent Resident status here over the last couple of years.

Mr Lee said the Government has to "go slow" on this for the time being, "because



Mr Lee Kuan Yew (right) at a session with delegates at the sixth annual Russia-Singapore Business Forum (RSBF) yesterday. The session was moderated by Ambassador Michael Tay (left), executive director of the RSBF and former Ambassador to Russia. PHOTO BY OOI HOON KENG

Singaporeans don't like to see too many strange faces on the trains and buses".

"And we as a government elected by the people, we have to take their views into consideration," Mr Lee added.

"But if you find Singapore interesting and useful for doing business and staying, I suggest you stay on. (The) situation may change because our birth rate has fallen to 1.15.

"In other words, unless you have immigrants, we will be like Japan, ageing population that gets smaller and smaller.

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"But at some point when they get old, today they are in their 20s, 30s, 40s, they don't need support. When they get into the 60s they need someone to run the

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With world markets jittery lately, yesterday's dialogue also assessed the state of the global economy.

Giving his take, Mr Lee said: "I think it is quite clear that European leaders would hate to admit failure, so they would do the utmost to prevent the break-up of the Euro."

Mr Lee turned 88 less than two weeks ago and he was also asked about his plans for the future.

Mr Lee, who was Prime Minister for over three decades, replied he had no "burning ambition" to change the world or Singapore.

"I don't think I have the time or the energy to do that. That's the job of the younger generation," he said.