

**TRANSCRIPT OF SENIOR MINISTER GOH CHOK TONG'S INTERVIEW WITH
THE LOCAL MEDIA AT POTONG PASIR, 27 MARCH 2006 AT 9.05PM**

Mr Goh: "I came here to review the battle plan of Sitoh Yih Pin. He's like a young, youthful challenger against a veteran and I think the veteran has passed his peak. I should know because I'm also a veteran and I think I've passed my peak. But the veteran still has a lot of experience and I believe a bag of tricks, so I came here to share my experience with Sitoh Yih Pin, but before that, I wanted to be briefed on his battle plan and I like what I saw. I can't tell you too much because when you go into the boxing ring, you must have some strategies kept for that important day. But basically I'm glad that he is not just focusing on the hardware, that is upgrading and more amenities for the people, he's concentrating on the software and the heartware, that to me is very important because it's about the people. He's got some ideas on how to reach out to the residents but I should not say more, otherwise there will be no new elements come election time."

Q: "So you were in Hougang yesterday, now today you're in Potong Pasir. What is your feel on both grounds?"

Mr Goh: "The Hougang which I was in, I felt good, partly because people recognised me as the Senior Minister and they were very friendly. But I'm realistic to know that warm reception for me need not necessarily be translated into votes. People recognised me and they looked quite warm. But as I've said yesterday, there is a chance, if we fight the battle well. For example, I noticed that the facade of certain blocks was as good as those in Aljunied, but when I went to the void deck and walked around, I looked up at the ceiling, looked at the floor, looked at the wall, I think they were not repainted, not the same manner as the façade. So we can pick on all these little points to tell the residents we can do things better. Come back to Potong Pasir, what do you have?"

Q: "What are the chances for Potong Pasir?"

Mr Goh: "I would not want to speculate but as I've said, whenever we go into battle, the chances are good and we must believe we have a chance. But let me make it clear: I am not in the arena fighting to win Potong Pasir. Sitoh Yih Pin is the main fighter. I am here to look at the battle plan, to give him some tips here and there, and I would say a few words in support of him, provided I agree with his plan. What I hope to do would be for him to fight the main battle and if he wins, or when he wins, I can be his resource person in Cabinet. That means whatever he wants to do for Potong Pasir, if I'm convinced they are good ideas, I will push for him in Cabinet. At the moment his ideas are just ideas. Nobody pushes for him, especially if he is not elected. Even after the election, he's a backbencher - who is going to push for him? But having been tasked by the Prime Minister to help him recover Potong Pasir, I will be his resource person in Cabinet."

Q: "Mr Goh, can you elaborate on what you said on lifting the party whip. Would this create a special class of MPs?"

Mr Goh: "Actually I was trying to find a way out to a question where somebody said that there were people who wanted opposition and upgrading, so in my mind, I thought, well we can have the best of both worlds. We can have upgrading and then if we elect Sitoh Yih Pin or Eric Low, we can lift the whip for them and we can also have opposition voice in parliament. But let's be clear: they are PAP MPs so it's not quite the same as opposition MPs. But what I hope Eric Low and Sitoh Yih Pin would do, regardless of whip being lifted or not, is to speak their minds frankly, whatever views they have, even though they disagree with the government or the party, they must voice them in parliament. That's important and that's my advice to Sitoh Yih Pin just now, I said, look, in order to establish yourself as an MP, you must not come across as a yes man, but as Sitoh Yih Pin who's got a view, got a voice, who's prepared to raise difficult issues to the government. So the whip is actually immaterial, it's whether he is prepared to speak on policies when he has a different view."

Q: "Mr Goh, you mentioned that you have some ideas for Mr Sitoh Yih Pin. Can you share some of them with us?"

Mr Goh: "The battle has not begun yet. The general idea, as I've said just now, was to address both the facilities part, what do people need, and then of course the software part, the older folks, the young people, those who can't pay their S&C charges, bread and butter issues. You've got to address those issues."

Q: "SM, when are you going to meet the residents of Potong Pasir?"

Mr Goh: "I'll probably do it a bit later because I'm traveling so I'm here in the evening. So when I come back, I may still come in the evening because I have to make up for lost time. I don't know when election will be, so if there's not plenty of time, I may just come in the evening. So if I come in the evening when I come back from the trip, then you'll know it's coming soon."

Q: "SM, five years ago you talked about perhaps precincts which voted for PAP would get a bit more benefits. Do you plan to adopt the same line?"

Mr Goh: "No, I think we have to change tactics. Never use the same battle plan twice."

Q: "After hearing Mr Sitoh's strategies, which are the areas you think he need to fine-tune and how do you assess his strategies so far?"

Mr Goh: "Good. In fact I have not much to offer. I came here with a slogan for him, but I found that the theme which he is going to use, in fact reflected what I wanted to tell him. In fact, his slogan is more elaborate than what I wanted for

him, so he's the man. Hey Sitoh, why don't you say a few words, you're fighting the battle."

Mr Sitoh: "Yes, I spoke to them."

Q: "What's the slogan?"

Mr Sitoh: "I will let you know on Nomination Day."

Mr Goh: "Actually, you're scared they will steal the slogan?" If I were you, I'll tell them what's my slogan, but you decide, you're fighting the battle."

Mr Sitoh: "SM, if you don't mind, I'll let them know on Nomination Day."

Mr Goh: "He wants to print it and then there's an element of surprise, freshness. More important is freshness because he does not know when election is. If it's next year then it will become stale. Fair enough, you decide. But basically, he will fight the main battle and I will be in the background to help him, and I've told him for the election rallies, he will make the main speech, not me. He's going to make a longer speech, a more impactful speech and I'll simply wrap up for him."

Q: "Does that mean you will be here for the rallies?"

Mr Goh: "Of course, here, Hougang and wherever I'm needed. Thank you."
