



GEN Y LEADER: Mr Pritam Singh with an Hougang resident and Workers' Party supporter yesterday. (PHOTO: THOMAS TAN)

WP'S PRITAM SINGH, 34, ALJUNIED GRC:

Real work starts from today - trying to ensure the residents are looked after.

By JOY FANG

IT WAS Sunday, the morning after a historic polling night, and the reality has sunk in for Workers' Party Member of Parliament (MP) elect Pritam Singh.

The party's Aljunied team created election history when they wrested a group representation constituency (GRC) from the People's Action Party.

Mr Singh, Mr Low Thia Khiang, Ms Sylvia Lim, Mr Chen Show Mao and Mr Muhamad Faisal Abdul Manap make up WP's "A-team". They are the first opposition team to nab a GRC, winning by a comfortable margin of 54.7 per cent.

Yesterday, at Hougang Town Council at 10am, before setting off for his team's victory parade around the Aljunied constituency, the 34-year-old recalled the elation he felt on Saturday night.

When it became clear around 11pm that his team had won, he was euphoric. "But (the feeling) quickly died down, much quicker than I expected it to, because we have a lot of work to do," he

said. Victory is "just one small step", he said in all seriousness, adding that the "real work starts from today - trying to ensure the residents are looked after".

So, his mind was "automatically set" on ensuring that for the next five years, he would do justice to himself and ensure the well-being of Aljunied residents.

Indeed, he was a picture of calm as he and his team arrived to much fanfare at Hougang Stadium on Saturday night, where thousands of supporters gathered. But he did break into grins and hug a crying woman as he went around shaking the hands of supporters.

But far from heading out to party after that, the filial chap went home to his family's terrace house in Jurong to wait for his mother, a housewife, and his father, a lawyer, to return from Hougang Stadium.

"They came up to my room and said they are quite proud of me, which is probably the best thing a son can hear from his parents," he said with a smile.

And how did he spend his first morning as an MP elect? He

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Teammates are all praise for Pritam

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got up at 8.30am, "dawdled about at home" and replied to congratulatory e-mail messages from his friends before leaving for the victory parade, he said.

An unknown before the election, the postgraduate law student at Singapore Management University will finish his studies by the end of the month.

Although he joined the WP only in May last year, Mr Singh, who is an executive-committee member of the party's youth wing, quickly made a name for himself with his rousing rally speeches.

Unlike his aggressive persona on-stage, away from the podium he comes across as genuinely nice and considerate.

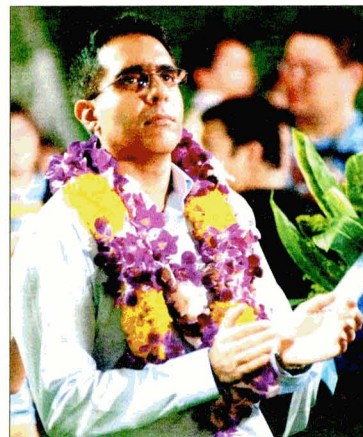
His Aljunied teammates concurred, having nothing but praise for him. Ms Lim said that Mr Singh's asset is his natural appeal to younger voters.

"He can weave football (analogies) into his rally speech, (which) has got some reaction from younger voters. And it is very authentic," she noted.

Mr Muhamad Faisal hailed him as being knowledgeable and a good team player.

"He's very sincere and down-to-earth. Sometimes, he will go beyond what he is supposed to do, like buying drinks for us," he said.

Said Mr Chen: "The Pritam I know in private is much like the Pritam you got to know through his speeches. He is clear-thinking, articulate, good-hu-



SERIOUS: Mr Pritam Singh remained calm even as the results were reported yesterday. (PHOTO: THOMAS TAN)

moured, passionate and principled. Our team has benefited from all these qualities in our many discussions."

Now that the baton has been passed on to him, Mr Singh said that he will focus on the Meet-the-People Sessions that are the "bread and butter" of being an MP.

He said that he is mulling over new strategies to serve the residents, among them ideas such as free legal and medical clinics. But these are "still in the brainstorming stage", he added.

The team is also thinking of doing away with the Residents Committee (RC) system, a concept they disagree with as they see it as a "top-down approach", he said.

"I want the residents to feel that they own part of Aljunied... We want to try and create something else," he said.

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