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Economic problem set to dominate discussions at MCA assembly

Alex Choong

THE current economic problem is set to dominate discussions at the MCA annual general assembly in Kuala Lumpur on Saturday.

The 2,000-odd delegates are expected to express their commitment to helping the country overcome the problem.

Economic issues aside, they will also discuss several amendments to the party constitution. They include enhancing the role of women in the party and increasing the number of elected central committee members.

Party president Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik is expected to lead the delegates in pledging their loyalty to the leadership of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who is also Barisan Nasional chairman, and in endorsing the party's political agenda which is to help overcome the economic problem in the shortest possible time.

In order to do this, Dr Ling wants MCA members in particular, and Malaysians in general, to support the ongoing "Love Malaysia, Buy Local Products" campaign.

"We want to make this a permanent Malaysian culture, even after the country gets over the present economic problem," he said in an interview.

Indeed, the efforts of the party and its Wanita wing to get more Malaysians to buy local products, save with local financial institutions and study locally have received enthusiastic support.

"Malaysians have responded very enthusiastically to these campaigns and the efforts of the party are starting to bear fruit."

Another issue that will be highlighted is the role of the small and medium-scale industries which are seen in most countries as being the economic foundations for seeing a nation through difficult times.

Projected as "efficient employers" that can help keep prices down, the SMIs have the full backing of the MCA which feels they must be supported and promoted in the efforts to overcome the economic problem.

On the proposed amendments to the party constitution, a major proposal is to give women, who make up 34 per cent of the 750,000 members, a bigger role in the party.

A new article is being proposed that will provide for the Wanita wing to have one delegate elected in each party division.

This is in line with the call by Dr Ling for 30 per cent of all councillors' posts allocated to MCA to be filled by members of Wanita MCA by the year 2000.

To provide better governance and decision-making, there is a proposal to amend the party constitution to increase the number of elected central committee members from the present 28 to 33 and also to give the president the power to appoint not more than eight CC members instead of seven.

At present, national delegates elect the president, deputy president, four vice-presidents and 20 CC members. The national chairmen of the Youth and Wanita movements become automatic vice-presidents.

If the amendment is approved, there will be an additional five elected CC members.

As membership in the party is expected to hit the one million mark in the next couple of years, an amendment will also be proposed to limit the number of delegates to the annual general assembly.

Dr Ling is also expected to report to the delegates on the party's education project, particularly the expansion of the Tunku Abdul Rahman College in Genting Klang and the setting up of its branch campuses in

Penang, Kampar, Segamat and Karak.

With the expansion, more than 20,000 students would be able to pursue diploma and degree courses in the college and its branch campuses.

In order to keep pace with information technology, the party is also in a hurry to get the electronic-commerce moving.

This is in line with the country's Multimedia Super Corridor project and it will open a lot of business opportunities over the Internet.

The Youth and the Wanita wings will hold its AGMs on Friday.

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