

Low turnout at MCA wings' AGMs raises questions
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Despite efforts by MCA leaders to consolidate and unite the party, the low turnout at the MCA Youth and Wanita annual general meetings raises questions.

If the turnout is any yardstick, it is a sign that all is not well in the party.

The attendance at the MCA Youth AGM was 51 percent and at the Wanita AGM 56 percent, much lower than at any previous annual general meeting, particularly in a non-election year.

Some party insiders attribute this to the strong "undercurrents" against the party's top leadership as some Youth and Wanita members are said to be not happy with the respective movements' leadership and several decisions by the top leadership.

Among the decisions are the recommendations for two posts of senatorship for the party, which has not gone down well with some quarters in the party.

The party's central committee had recommended Wanita MCA secretary-general Chew Lee Giok instead of the movement's chief Yu Chok Tow as a candidate for senatorship.

Another of the decisions was to extend the senatorship of Khoo Soo Seang for another three years.

The above proposals, which were made in view of the vacancy for two MCA senatorial positions, has riled some members in both movements as they believe other people should be given the opportunity to hold the positions.

"What we see is that they only nominated people who are linked to the party president to hold the positions," said a party insider.

Apart from that, the situation was made worse by a tussle between two groups in the Wanita movement - one linked to the previous leadership and the other to the current leadership.

However, top leaders of both movements have downplayed the percentage turnout as they regarded it as common since it was not a party election year.

"The turnout could easily hit 80 per cent if the AGM was held in an election year. This is very common," said Yu, the Wanita MCA chief.

"This is not the worst. Before, we have had an average of between 29 and 50 per cent turnout. This is normal during a non-election year. Of course, it could be better," said MCA youth chief Wee Ka Siong.

Other leaders believe the low turnout could be related to the Nine Emperor Gods festival on Oct 10 tomorrow as well as many weddings taking place on the auspicious date of 10.10.10.

The Nine Emperor Gods Festival is a nine-day Taoist celebration beginning on the eve of

ninth lunar month of the Chinese calendar, which is observed tomorrow, primarily in Southeast Asian countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and also the Riau Islands.

However, for party veteran Yap Pian Hon, the low turnout also showed that the movement had not regained confidence following its worst electoral performance in the 2008 general election.

"The confidence level among members has not really returned. They have to work out how to regain the confidence in the youth movement, how to ensure the spirit of the political party is reinstalled immediately," he said.

Yap, who is also a former MCA Youth chief and three-term party vice-president, said that even during a non-election year, the turnout at AGMs has been between 60 and 70 percent.

"However, what is more important is that the meeting is on and it shows that some delegates are still concerned for the party and they turn up at the meeting to show their support," he said.

- Bernama

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