

DAP's Liew Chin Tong is going places
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BY EILEEN NG

No one was more shocked than Liew Chin Tong (pic) himself when he found out that he topped the list in DAP's central executive committee (CEC) election last night.

The 36-year-old could not fathom why he beat bigwigs like Karpal Singh, Lim Kit Siang and even fiery Lim Guan Eng.

"I'm not sure. It is the decision of the delegates, and I thank them for the honour," a stunned Liew told reporters when asked the reasons for his popularity.

In the December party polls, Liew only garnered 984 votes, which gave him the 14th spot in the 20-member CEC.

At the special congress yesterday, Liew received 1,438 votes.

Modesty aside, Liew zoomed to the top partly because of his work as party strategist and his down-to-earth demeanour.

Many credited the DAP tactician's work in the run-up and during the 13th general election when his secular, Chinese-dominated party had its best showing.

DAP also penetrated the southern state of Johor, which was deemed to be a BN fortress all this while.

In the May national polls, DAP won 38 parliamentary and 95 state seats.

"It's a reflection of his success in Johor and the good work that he has done," notes Liew's party colleague, Bukit Bendera MP Zairil Khir Johari.

Heavyweights... Senior DAP leaders at the party's special congress in Petaling Jaya yesterday. (From left) Karpal Singh, Lim Kit Siang, Gobind Singh Deo and Lim Guan Eng. - The Malaysian Insider pic by Najjua Zulkefli, September 30, 2013. Heavyweights... Senior DAP leaders at the party's special congress in Petaling Jaya yesterday. (From left) Karpal Singh, Lim Kit Siang, Gobind Singh Deo and Lim Guan Eng. - The Malaysian Insider pic by Najjua Zulkefli, September 30, 2013. Liew's talent, age and affable nature make for an attractive package to members who see him as a second echelon leader who can take over the reins of the party when the older leaders step down.

The second-term MP, described by many as "hardworking" and "humble", earned the admiration of members, especially those from Johor, when he gave up his previous parliamentary seat of Bukit Bendera - a safe seat - to contest in Kluang.

He unseated MCA's Dr Hou Kok Chung, a former deputy minister.

"Members do recognise leaders who work hard for the party," said Ipoh Timur MP Thomas Su.

As for the CEC fresh polls which saw the same set of leaders elected into the powerful committee, observers said it is to send a strong message to the Registrar of Societies (RoS) that the party is not to be trifled with.

It is also to show that despite DAP's run-ins with RoS, after the party announced in January a tabulation error in its previous polls, the party remained more united than ever.

"The results are not unexpected. It's not an election per se, but a reaction from delegates to an external challenge," said political analyst Khoo Kay Peng in referring to DAP's battles with RoS and the reason why the status quo was maintained.

With the tedious business of conducting fresh polls now over, DAP can finally concentrate on things that really matters - to chart the party's future and cobble a plan with its Pakatan Rakyat partners to take over Putrajaya.

"We want to be left alone so we can get on with our work. There is a lot to be done," said chairman Karpal. - September 30, 2013.

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