

Datuk Dr. Neo Yee Pan (Acting President March 1983 – November 1985)



Datuk Dr Neo Yee Pan was born in Muar in 1938. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Physics from the University of Malaya in Singapore and a Phd in physics from the University of Saskatchewan, Canada.

Between 1968 and 1974, Datuk Dr Neo was a lecturer in physics at the University of Malaya.

On August 11, 1973, he was elected a member of the MCA Central Committee and was appointed the Deputy Secretary General of the Party. The following year, he was elected MP for Muar and was appointed Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Resources, Technology and Research.

Between 1975 and 1979, he was the Secretary General of the MCA. In 1975, he was appointed Deputy Culture, Youth and Sports Minister and in 1978, the Deputy Finance Minister.

In the 1978 July general elections, he was re-elected MP for Muar and in the August 1979 MCA Annual General Assembly, he was elected a vice-president.

On September 15 the same year, he was appointed Housing and Local Government Minister. On October 28, he was conferred DPMJ by the Sultan of Johor which carries the title of Dato'.

In the April 22 general elections in 1982, he was re-elected MP for Muar and subsequently, re-appointed Minister of Housing and Local Government. On February 8 the following year, he was appointed Johor MCA Liaison Committee Chairman. On March 25, Tan Sri Lee San Choon announced his resignation as the MCA President and on May 1, he formally bid farewell to politics.

With the resignation of Tan Sri Lee, Datuk Dr Neo became the Acting President and started building his power base. He appointed Datuk Mak Hon Kam as the Acting Deputy President. In addition, he set up eight new committees to implement the eight major projects, effectively displacing other Central Committee members who were then heading the various bureaus in charge of these projects. They included Datuk Lee Kim Sai and Datuk Wong Mook Leong.

The dispute came to a head when on March 19, 1984 Dr Neo invoked the presidential power to expel the Selangor and Federal Territorial Liaison Committee Chairmen and a Central Committee member. On the same day, Datuk Mak also expelled 14 party leaders at various levels, including Datuk Seri Dr Ling Liong Sik who was then a Central Committee member and Deputy Finance Minister, Vice- President Tan Koon Swan, MCA Youth leader and Vice-President Datuk Lee Kim Sai and several other leaders.

The party crisis was sparked off by allegations of phantom membership. It lasted 20 months before a Extraordinary Meeting of the General Assembly on 11th November 1985 formally elected Tan Koon Swan as the new president.