3 students elected to PAP forum council

Zakir Hussain

For the first time in its history, not one, but three undergraduates have been elected to the 12-member council of the People's Action Party's Policy Forum.

They are Ms Yvonne Chia, 20, a first-year political science student at Peking University; Mr Moham mad Faris Mokhtar, 21, who begins a degree in sociology and English at UnSIM in July; and Mr Shawn Tan, 22, first-year National University of Singapore law student.

Ms Chia is active in the party's Nee Soon South branch, while Mr Faris is active in its Marine Parade branch and Mr Tan in its Tampines East branch.

The Policy Forum is an avenue for party members to give their input on national policy matters. Its council organises policy discussions for party members.

Sembawang GRC MP Ellen Lee, a former forum chairman, said the election of younger council members was very encouraging: "They are taking a stake in how the party moves ahead."

The Policy Forum has established a strong footing in the party since it was formed in 2004, she said.

Each of the party's 84 branches elects two members to the forum. In addition, there are 10 members each from the Women's Wing and the Young PAP.

Yesterday, Transport Minister Raymond Lim, an adviser to the forum, thanked the outgoing council for following up on discussions with party leaders.

Their reports and recommendations on topics like education and health care will be taken into account when the party formulates its manifesto for the next general election, he said.

The forum also enabled members to gain insights into public policy and the choices, benefits and costs involved, he added.

"Very few, if indeed any, policies are cost-free. Thus it is important to not just find the problems with any policy - that is the easy part - but also to ask what are the costs," he said.

"By understanding this, I hope the next time you hear someone make a speech with many appetising things in it, you ask him, and this is the real test: How is he going to turn his words into deeds?"

Of the 12 council members, only three have served before.

They are the chairman, lawyer Satwant Singh, 46; vice-chairman Ori Sasson, a 39-year-old academic; and Women's Wing representative, scientist Ong Siew Hua, 38.

The rest are banker Chiang Heng Liang, 50; media executive Malmindirjit Singh, 31; safety manager Marcus Lee, 38; construction lawyer Monica Neo, 42; insurance lawyer Satthinathan Karuppliah, 47; and business development head Collin Tseng-Liu, 36.

Council chairman, Mr Singh, said the top three issues he hopes to discuss in the coming months are housing, the integration of new-comers and efforts to help lower-income Singaporeans.