

## Will Yaw saga be major issue?

**Lediati Tan,**  
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He may be out of sight, but not out of mind.

Despite having left the country in February, former Hougang Member of Parliament (MP) Yaw Shin Leong continues to be a talking point.

It was his expulsion from the Workers' Party (WP) in February over his failure to account for his alleged extra-marital affairs that led to the Hougang by-election to be held on May 26.

The Yaw Shin Leong saga was brought up by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong in his statement on the Hougang by-election, which he posted on Facebook.

In the statement issued on Wednesday, PM Lee criticised WP and Mr Yaw for failing to give Singaporeans a proper account of what happened.

WP chief and Aljunied Group Representation Constituency MP Low Thia Kiang also brought up the Yaw Shin Leong incident at the start of the press conference to introduce Mr Png Eng Huat as WP's candidate in Hougang.

### **Drastic steps**

He said: "When former MP Yaw Shin Leong failed to account for the allegations made against him, the WP, being a responsible party (which) values itself as a party of integrity, had to take drastic steps to expel him from the party."

Yesterday, Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) Tharman Shanmugaratnam added to what PM Lee raised.

He told reporters at the introduction of Mr Desmond Choo as the People's Action Party (PAP) candidate for the by-election: "They're not just about one particular candidate that turned out to be irresponsible, but a broader issue about how we go about our affairs as a party."

But Mr Choo made it clear that he does not want to leverage on what happened with Mr Yaw and stressed that the incident would not distract him from his work.

He said: "To me, it is a closed chapter. The by-election should focus on bringing the best person into the ward to serve the residents."

So while the Yaw Shin Leong incident is a significant event that led to the Hougang by-election, it remains to be seen how it will be played out in the election campaign.

Institute of Policy Studies senior research fellow Gillian Koh said: "To begin with, the PM had referred to it in his statement in the context of urging Hougang residents to be cautious in their choice."

"I think DPM Tharman, the second assistant secretary-general of the PAP, was pressed by journalists on it, and he and Desmond Choo expressed the view that the issue was closed. Mr Choo also said that he had moved past that already."

"If we take them at their word, it is unlikely for the issue to be repeated further after today from their camp at least."

Political observer and former Nominated Member of Parliament Zulkifli Baharudin said the issue is "something that the electorate will have to bear in mind because it is why the by-election is being called for".

He said: "As far as WP is concerned, they may not want to talk about it. But if PAP were to dwell on it, people may say they are being too personal. So whether it becomes a major issue or not, it is hard to say."

Dr Koh added: "I think it's more for Desmond Choo's campaign to focus on his agenda and prove why he might be the better man."