

# The Annual General Meeting

*by A.A. Sandosham*

VIEWS FROM ANY ANGLE, it can be safely asserted that the Eleventh A.G.M. held in Penang from 2nd to 4th April, 1971 was a grand success. The arrangements, which had been in the hands of an Organising Committee, with Mr. Peter C. Vanniasingam as Chairman and Dr. Chee Chin Seang as Secretary, were excellent with all the meetings being held in the airconditioned comfort of the Mandarin Hotel and the Association owes a debt of gratitude to our hosts in Penang. The attendance was good, many members having travelled up to Penang with their wives to join their counterparts in the Northern Branch. As expected, the Informal Night at which members and their wives let their hair down, was a resounding success. The Annual Dinner and Ball was well patronised with covers laid for more than 350 and was graced by His Excellency the Governor of Penang and his Consort, the Minister of Health and the Chief Minister and their wives, the Joint-President of the Commonwealth Medical Association and representatives of the Indonesian Medical Association and various sister professional organisations. The social gatherings and entertainment arranged for the ladies were well attended and much appreciated. The competitions in tennis and golf were well organised and the large audience benefited much from the high standard of the papers presented and the discussions at the Forum held as part of the Scientific Session.

The Annual General Meeting itself was a lively affair and the Annual Report of the outgoing Council, drawn up by the Hon. Secretary, Dr. Pius Martin (who was unanimously re-elected), was discussed page by page. There were many questions requesting clarification and amplification, sometimes

by members who had not taken the trouble to read documents that had been circulated in advance. There were those who felt that the Council could have achieved more and acted more speedily.

As mentioned by Dr. V. Thuraisingham in his Incoming President's Address, there have been rumblings of discontent among the younger members of the Association but few had come forward with constructive suggestions and offered their services to do preparatory work and help make a case or find a solution. He appealed to them to join the Association and contribute not only their weight in numbers, but also their energy, minds, aspirations and enthusiasm for the good of the profession, remembering that our Association is not a Trade Union empowered to negotiate terms and conditions of service with the employer. Despite these criticisms, it was evident to the meeting that the Out-going Council had done a splendid job during its year of office by increasing ordinary and life membership, maintaining a high standard of professional ethics, having representatives on numerous Boards and Committees, organising clinical and scientific meetings, publishing regularly the Medical Journal of Malaya, the MMA Newsletter and the Public Health Society Bulletin, organising the successful 5th Council Meeting of the Commonwealth Medical Association and generally looking after the interest of the profession in the country. On the proposal of Dr. T. Satchithanandan, the President-Elect, the General Meeting passed heartily and unanimously a resolution proposing the adoption of the Annual Report and congratulating the Out-going Council, particularly the President, Dato (Dr.) Keshmahinder Singh, for a job of work well done.

One problem that was discussed at length was the incorrect image of the Association that was projected to the profession, the public and Government by misleading newspaper headlines and the over-emphasis of critical comments taken out of context from our publications like the MMA Newsletter or talks given by MMA officials at Conferences, Seminars and Forums. Sometimes, wrong statements are attributed to the Association or its officials without their retraction when the mistake is pointed out. Even if corrected, the mischief has been done and it can be very upsetting to the Association and other parties concerned. Dato (Dr.) Abdul Majid bin Ismail suggested that much of our trouble arose from a lack of liaison and dialogues with the press, the Ministry of Health and others involved. The problem is how to achieve the desired result. An appeal was made to members to use their influence and lobby the right people and explain the policies and activities of the Association to avoid misunderstandings in the future.

Substantial changes have been effected in our Constitution which will come into force with their ratification by the Registrar of Societies. The name of the Association has been changed to Malaysian Medical Association, thus permitting the opening of membership to doctors in East Malaysia. Steps will be taken to start negotiations with the Sarawak and Sabah Medical Associations to finalise future relationship. In keeping with the democratisation of the presidential election procedure recommended by the A.G.M. last year, it is now possible for any member to nominate a candidate although the latter should be

from one of the three different regions in rotation, and every member will now have the right to vote him into office by postal ballot on the lines of the system adopted in electing members to the Medical Council. While this procedure will result in casting the net more widely and make every member feel he has a say in the election of the President, there is the possibility of having too many names on the list and, judging by past experience, a relatively smaller proportion of doctors, especially among the isolated private medical practitioners, taking the trouble to send in their ballot papers. If all members are not aware of this and do not put in the extra effort to get ballot papers duly filled and posted, there is a real danger of this important office being held, year after year, by Government officers from the country's big hospitals where there is a concentration of members easily approachable by the energetic canvasser.

In the past, we have had the services of private medical practitioners like Dr. S.G. Rajahram, Dato (Dr.) R. Sathiah, Dato (Dr.) A.W.E. Moreira, Dr. R.F. D'Costa, Dr. Tan Chee Khoo, Dr. J.B.A. Peter and Dato (Dr.) Keshmahinder Singh, many of whom have made substantial contributions to the advancement and progress of our Association. It is to be hoped that this will be kept in mind and that all members, including the private medical practitioners, will make a determined effort to vote and make the democratising process a success, resulting in the election to the most coveted position in our Association a person of the highest calibre, be he in the public or the private sector.