

# Experts Think Cabinet Reshuffle Doesn't Indicate Who'll Be Our Next PM

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While we literally were rearranging things in our cupboard yesterday, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong appointed seven ministers to new ministries in an [extensive Cabinet reshuffle](#).

It's certainly a move we weren't expecting, given that the Cabinet was formed just nine months ago.

Interestingly, several of the new appointees have been touted by analysts to be our next PM.

Does this give an indication as to who will acquire all of PM Lee's pink shirts when he steps down?

Well, before we get into that, here's a brief summary of the Cabinet reshuffle.

## *7 Ministries Get New Ministers*

The face of the fight against COVID-19, Mr Lawrence Wong, will take over the Finance Ministry from DPM Heng Swee Keat.

The 48-year-old was appointed Education Minister last July and has also been Second Minister for Finance since 2016.

Mr Chan Chun Sing, 51, will be vacating his post in the Ministry of Trade and Industry and will helm the Education Ministry.

Our very own Daniel Dae Kim lookalike – Mr Ong Ye Kung – will be appointed Minister for Health. The 51-year-old took over the Transport Ministry just nine months ago. He will now co-chair the COVID-19 multi-ministry task force with Mr Wong.

His post in the Transport Ministry will be taken over by Mr S Iswaran, 58.

And Mr Gan Kim Yong, 62, who has been the Health Minister for almost a decade, will soon lead the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

52-year-old Manpower Minister Josephine Teo will take over the Ministry of Communications and Information, while Dr Tan See Leng, 56 will take her place.

## *Reasons For Extensive Cabinet Reshuffle*

As for why PM Lee carried out such an extensive cabinet reshuffle just nine months after it was formed, he gave two reasons.

The first has to do with Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat's abrupt [announcement](#) two weeks ago, where he stepped down as 4G leader.

"The Minister for Finance is changing. Following Budget 2021, DPM Heng is relinquishing the Finance portfolio. Finance is a key ministry, so when the Finance Minister changes, it has many repercussions," PM Lee [said](#).

Secondly, the changes made when the Cabinet was formed were "interim changes" according to PM Lee.

And he's now making the full set of changes.

"Unfortunately it can't be helped, I think it's a bit disruptive for the ministries," he said.

"But I hope that after this adjustment, the new ministers in those two posts will be able to settle down for some time."

So, what does this mean for the race for the Prime Minister's post?

### *Post Remains Open*

While analysts maintain that no one is currently leading the race, they found [two changes in particular noteworthy](#).

The first is Mr Wong's promotion to Finance Minister around nine months after taking over the Education Ministry.

Mr Wong, famous wearer of white shirts, has been praised for his handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

So, moving him so abruptly to the Finance Ministry is "significant", National University of Singapore Associate Professor of Sociology Tan Ern Ser told [CNA](#).

"It suggests to me that he is on a trajectory likely to lead to a higher appointment."

As for Mr Ong, he will now be on equal footing with Mr Wong as co-chairmen of the COVID-19 multi-ministry task force. His switch from the Transport Ministry to the Ministry of Health was also unexpected.

Another move no one saw coming was Mr Chan's new appointment as Education Minister.

Dr Gillian Koh, deputy director of research at the Institute of Policy Studies, thinks this is a "curious" move, given that it's an "internally oriented ministry", compared to the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

For these reasons, observers believe these three ministers are the main contenders for the Prime Minister's post.

PM Lee and the PAP may be keeping a close watch on the performances of the three ministers in their new posts, as will Singaporeans.