

Ex-Asean chief is new S'pore envoy to KL **Ong Keng Yong will take up post of High Commissioner next month**

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Mr Ong will give up his position as director of the Institute of Policy Studies tomorrow. Mr Janadas Devan will take over the post. – ST PHOTO: JOYCE FANG

VETERAN diplomat Ong Keng Yong, 57, has been appointed Singapore's next High Commissioner to Malaysia and will take up his post on July 18, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced yesterday.

Mr Ong, who takes over from Mr T. Jasudasen, 58, is currently an Ambassador-At-Large in the ministry and Singapore's non-resident Ambassador to Iran.

He is also director of the Institute of Policy Studies (IPS) in the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore.

Prior to these appointments, Mr Ong was the Asean secretary-general from January 2003 to January 2008.

His appointment as Singapore's top diplomat to Malaysia will mark his second stint in Kuala Lumpur. He had served in the High Commission there as counsellor and deputy chief of mission from 1989 to 1991.

The foreign policy veteran was also High Commissioner to India and concurrently Ambassador to Nepal from 1996 to 1998.

A lawyer by training, he joined the ministry in 1979 after graduating from the then University of Singapore.

He has since also served in Saudi Arabia, the United States, and various ministry directorates.

Mr Ong, who has a Master of Arts in Arab Studies from Georgetown University in Washington DC, was also press secretary to then Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong from 1998 to 2002, and chief executive of the People's Association from 1999 to 2002.

Mr Ong, who became IPS director in June 2008, will relinquish the position tomorrow. He was not immediately available for comment on his new appointment to Malaysia as he was attending a conference abroad.

Succeeding him as IPS director will be Mr Janadas Devan, an associate editor of The Straits Times.

Mr Devan, 56, was educated at the University of Singapore and Cornell University in the United States. He taught in various institutions in the US and Singapore before joining The Straits Times in 1997.

Contacted yesterday about his appointment and what he will bring to it, Mr Devan said: 'Journalists are generalists. We look at policies from many angles - politically, socially and in terms of communicating policy to the wider public. I hope those facilities will add to the existing intellectual research and networking strength of the IPS.'

He identified three roles for the IPS in the coming years:

- To look at current domestic policy concerns in a calm, dispassionate manner;
- To look at over-the-horizon issues - what is likely to affect Singapore in the next 10 to 15 years; and
- To function as a clearing house, an honest broker among various stakeholders in public policy, including those in academia, civil society, the voluntary sector and the private sector.

'Some of the best work IPS has done over the years arose from such facilitation. It will be useful to do more of that in the current political environment,' he said.

Mr Devan will retain his links with The Straits Times as a senior editor. Said Mr Patrick Daniel, editor-in-chief of Singapore Press Holdings' English and Malay Newspapers Division: 'This is a practical, win-win arrangement. I'm sure Janadas will make a first-rate IPS director, and we get to retain his services as a senior editor, albeit half-time.'

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