

Key PAP roles for two next-generation leaders

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Heng Swee Keat to lead analysis of recent GE showing; Chan Chun Sing to head HQ exco

Two younger ministers have been given key responsibilities in the People's Action Party (PAP) in its ongoing push for leadership renewal.

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat will lead the party's efforts to analyse its performance in the 2015 General Election and draw lessons for the next electoral campaign.

Meanwhile, labour chief Chan Chun Sing will head the executive committee of the party's headquarters (HQ), which oversees the administration and coordination of the PAP's activities across its 89 branches. He takes over from Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean.

Mr Heng will be the committee's alternate chairman.

The changes were announced by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong, the PAP's secretary-general, on his Facebook page. "The work of preparing for GE 2021 has started," Mr Lee said. "The HQ executive committee will work with MPs and activists on the party's plans and programmes. We will partner Singaporeans to deliver on what we have promised, improve people's lives, and fulfil our duty to Singapore."

Mr Heng, in a post on his Facebook page, said his team would consist of party members with a wide range of experience. He also pledged to seek views from a broad spectrum and "discuss deeply" with the chairmen and activists of all the PAP branches.

Mr Heng and Mr Chan have both performed other duties besides their ministerial portfolios since their entry into politics in 2011.

Most recently, Mr Heng was appointed to lead a committee on "The Future Economy" to study how to create better careers and also help companies adapt to changing global trends. Mr Chan was made the Government Whip, who ensures there are enough PAP MPs to support the party's position in Parliament.

Observers say the moves have added significance because the ministers involved are deemed to be of prime-minister material. Said Dr Gillian Koh of the Institute of Policy Studies: "Being assigned posts in various PAP set-ups is just part of the process of party renewal. But clearly it's newsworthy because people think of Heng Swee Keat as being in pole position to be the next PM."

"Not far behind are Chan Chun Sing, (acting education ministers) Ng Chee Meng and Ong Ye Kung, and (Social and Family Development Minister) Tan Chuan-Jin."

She added: "The PAP wants Singaporeans to recognise that these front runners are gradually taking over from the older leaders. They also have the opportunity to prove themselves to the party members."

Besides having a new chairman, the HQ executive committee also has 11 new members. They include five first-term MPs: Mr Ng, Mr Ong, Minister of State Chee Hong Tat, Parliamentary Secretary Amrin Amin, and Dr Koh Poh Koon.

The other MPs in it are senior ministers of state Amy Khor and Sim Ann, Minister of State Lam Pin Min, Parliamentary Secretary Baey Yam Keng, Dr Janil Puthucheary and Mr David Ong.

Mr Amrin said the newcomers could give fresh perspectives that can complement the existing ones. He added: "I'm looking forward to learning more about how the party works."

Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat (left) will lead the PAP's efforts to analyse its performance in the 2015 General Election, while labour chief Chan Chun Sing will head the executive committee of the party's headquarters.