

## Khaw to let younger ministers lead his ministry's budget debate

*Linette Lai*

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Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan will play a "supportive role" in next year's Budget debate, and has asked his ministry's two senior ministers of state to take the lead.

Allowing Dr Lam Pin Min and Dr Janil Puthuchery to lead the charge is "part and parcel" of the leadership transition, he said yesterday.

"The young ministers need to be able to reach out to their own young generation of Singaporeans, work together and share each other's aspirations for Singapore for the future," said Mr Khaw, who is also Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure.

He pointed out that Dr Janil is already managing the public consultation exercise on the Land Transport Master Plan 2040, which looks at how to make car-lite transport the preferred choice for commuters.

"(Dr Janil) is meeting all kinds of Singaporeans, young and old, especially the young because this will be about their future," he said.

Mr Khaw also said "stretching" both younger men by letting them take the lead in the Budget debate will be good for the development of their political career.

"Let them plan, strategise, discuss with the officials first, as well as Singaporeans by and large, and see what should be the focus and how they intend to present it," he added.

"I will still be involved, but more in a supportive role," he said, adding that he has full confidence that the two men would be able to manage the debate on the Transport Ministry's budget.

Mr Khaw was speaking to reporters on the sidelines of a visit to Sengkang Depot, where he announced the upgrading of the North East Line.

Earlier this month, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said a Cabinet reshuffle would take place sometime after the Budget debate. With the debate ending in March, PM Lee hinted that the changes could be made in April or May.

When asked if he was preparing to hand over his role as Transport Minister in the light of the coming reshuffle, Mr Khaw laughed and quipped: "That, you have to ask PM (Lee)."

Political observers do not see Mr Khaw stepping down after the reshuffle because he will still be needed to mentor the younger leaders.

His decision to give the two younger men a bigger role is in keeping with the ruling party's stated plan to have the younger fourth-generation (4G) leaders take a more prominent role in Government and greater responsibilities.

It would be similar to the way the younger members of the Cabinet largely drafted the President's Address in May, said Institute of Policy Studies deputy director of research Gillian Koh.

"I don't think the third-generation leaders will drop out of the scene completely after the Cabinet reshuffle," Dr Koh said.

Dr Felix Tan, an associate lecturer at SIM Global Education, added that having the 4G leaders play a more high-profile role also lets Singaporeans get used to new faces fronting major issues.

"This is yet another example that will push the 4G leaders to the fore and allow Singaporeans to see what they are capable of," he said.