

## **Masagos' Promotion Reflects Malay Progress**

### **Mr Masagos Zulkifli becomes second Malay full minister in Cabinet today**

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For the first time in Singapore history, there will be two Malay/Muslim full ministers in the Cabinet from today.

Mr Masagos Zulkifli, 51, was promoted to Minister in the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), announced the PMO yesterday.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said in a Facebook post yesterday evening: "He has performed well, both in his ministries and as an MP in Tampines.

"It is the first time we are having two Malay full ministers, which reflects the progress of the Malay community."

Mr Masagos joins Communications and Information Minister Yaacob Ibrahim, who became a full minister in 2003.

Political analysts see Mr Masagos' promotion as positive news for the Malay/Muslim community.

Mr Masagos joined politics in 2006. He will continue in the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) as Second Minister in both ministries after his promotion.

Singapore Management University law professor Eugene Tan notes that it is traditionally uncommon for Malay ministers to hold positions in MHA and MFA.

Associate Prof Tan said: "His appointment as a full minister demonstrates the growing and significant role that Malay leaders can play in a national leadership."

**National University of Singapore sociologist Tan Ern Ser said: "It is a recognition of his experience and capability as Minister of State and Senior Minister of State. The new appointments are ones where ethnicity probably has some bearing."**

Other Cabinet changes involve Mr Chan Chun Sing, Mr Lim Swee Say, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin and Mr Lui Tuck Yew. (See report on right.)

The political analysts see these changes as a response to Mr Chan's move to NTUC to take over from Mr Lim as secretary-general.

But the experience of these new appointments would also be tapped in their new ministries.

For instance, Mr Lui, who is now also Second Minister for Defence, was Chief of Navy in 1999.

And former labour chief Lim's eight years of experience in NTUC and five years in the Economic Development Board makes him an ideal candidate to head the Ministry of Manpower (MOM).

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Dr Gillian Koh, senior research fellow at the Institute of Policy Studies, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, said: "Over the years, Mr Lim has been proactive in working on many areas of concern like improving the skills and wages of low-wage workers, CPF reforms to improve retirement adequacy and the re-employment of senior workers."

Dr Tan thinks that Mr Lim's move from the union to MOM will allow him to take the perspective of the Government.

Although there were no major cabinet reshuffles this year, Dr Koh notes that there have been several changes — one every year — since the major reshuffle in 2011.

She said: "In the previous years, there was the promotion of younger faces such as Mr Desmond Lee, Ms Low Yen Ling, Ms Sim Ann and Ms Grace Fu to ministerial level to facilitate leadership renewal in due course."

Prof Tan said: "The changes were not going to be dramatic, given that there's not much runway to the next elections (which have to be held by January 2017).

"It's now time to consolidate and refine what has been done over the past few years."