

No surprises from Cabinet reshuffle: Analysts

Cheow Sue-Ann & Lim Min Zhang

The New Paper, 25 April 2018

There were few surprises in the Cabinet reshuffle announced yesterday, said analysts.

Said Singapore Management University law don Eugene Tan: "The changes are not as extensive as I expected. Perhaps I read too much into the Prime Minister's comment that the reshuffle will involve every ministry.

"The movements are not very significant, especially regarding the portfolio and assignments of the 4G leaders."

The Cabinet will now see two-thirds of the ministries filled by younger ministers. There will also be three women ministers.

Associate Professor Tan said that the rotation of ministries could be part of Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's new approach to Cabinet building.

He said: "Finding good leaders remains important, but there is a move to place focus on the team as well.

"Rather than just focus on the individuals, the new appointments ensure that younger ministers and the junior ministers at minister of state levels have an opportunity to try out many ministries.

"This will ensure a broad base where ministers have as much experience as possible."

He said for the four first-time office holders - Dr Tan Wu Meng, Mr Edwin Tong, Ms Sun Xueling and Mr Zaqy Mohamad - the appointments could be a test given that they are from the private sector.

SPECIAL ADVISER

Commenting on the move to make Mr Lim Hng Kiang special adviser to the Ministry for Trade and Industry, the Institute of Policy Studies deputy director Gillian Koh said: "We know that Mr Lim was very much involved in the Trans-Pacific Partnership, as well as regional integration in Asean and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.

"These are highly technical issues, they are also very much tied to the networks of policy-makers across many regions.

"So the move allows Minister Chan Chun Sing to ride on, not lose, the network, as well as the technical nuances that will help him carry out this important work forward for Singapore."