

**Najib says bloated cabinet unavoidable**  
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Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak acknowledged that the cabinet size has grown with the latest appointments but claimed that it was unavoidable due to special circumstances.

"We had to make adjustments based on MCA's decision. At first they said they didn't want to be in the (cabinet), but then they reviewed this (decision) and saw the need to join the government," he said.

He also revealed that the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines MH370 forced him to postpone the cabinet reshuffle.

"We couldn't announce earlier because of MH370.

"We needed to have full focus on it, and that continuity was important.

"Now that we have moved on to the new phase of MH370, I think it's an appropriate time for us to make an announcement," said the premier.

He added that talks will be held to decide whether new Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai will assume responsibility for the search of the missing plane, taking over from Hishammuddin Hussein.

Following the latest reshuffle, there are 35 full ministers, including the PM and DPM, and 27 deputy ministers.

In the PM's Department alone, there are 10 ministers and a deputy minister.

As for Persatuan Hindraf Malaysia (PHM) chairperson P Waythamoorthy, Najib said there would not be a replacement since a cabinet task force has been entrusted with handling the tasks in that portfolio.

Waythamoorthy quit as deputy minister in the Prime Minister's Department after accusing the government of failing to keep its word on uplifting the socio-economic status of Indian Malaysians.

Mah and Wee's portfolio not announced

Stressing that there would be no further changes to the cabinet for now, Najib (left) said Gerakan president Mah Siew Keong and MCA number 2 Wee Ka Siong's responsibilities would be announced later.

Mah was appointed as minister in the Prime Minister's Department following his victory in the tightly-fought Teluk Intan by-election.

"My expectation is for them to perform their duties, and responsibilities well.

"Although we represent our own component parties, and in a way, our own ethnic groups, but don't forget the wider responsibility that we are a collectively a Barisan government, so we have to taken into account the interest of all communities," he said,

On a lighter note, Najib joked that none of the current crop of cabinet ministers and deputy ministers had volunteered to step down, leading to the large cabinet.

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