

No surprises in MCA cabinet line-up
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There was really no surprises in Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi's announcement today with the MCA's line-up in his new cabinet. MCPX

Of the total four ministerial posts, MCA secretary-general Ong Ka Chuan - who is party president Ka Ting's elder brother - is the only newcomer to the federal level, while the other appointees had previously served in the 2004 cabinet.

Meanwhile, MCA boss Ka Ting, who has publicly declined to be picked as a minister, is out of the cabinet.

The three promoted to full ministers are vice-president Ong Tee Keat, Wanita chief Dr Ng Yen Yen and Youth chief Liow Tiong Lai.

Ong, who previously served as deputy higher education minister, was promoted to the Transport ministerial portfolio replacing Chan Kong Choy, who did not contest for a seat in the recent polls.

Despite earlier speculations that Ng would be given the health ministry post, she was instead promoted the Women and Family Development portfolio despite her professional qualifications as a medical doctor. Ng graduated in medicine from the Universiti Malaya in 1972 and worked as a medical consultant before she was appointed senator in 1993.

The health portfolio was given to Liow who had previously served as youth and sports deputy minister. Liow replaces Dr Chua Soi Lek who had stepped down in the wake of a sex video scandal two months before the general election.

Liow holds a bachelor of science degree from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and a MBA from Universiti Malaya. His appointment is seen as a slight departure to the previous health minister, Chua, who is a trained doctor before taking up political office.

In any case, the health portfolio in the past had been held by MCA leaders who were not medical doctors including Chan Siang Sun, Lee Kim Sai and Chua Jui Meng.

Six deputy ministers

For the deputy ministers' line-up, all six except Chor Chee Heung (who previously held the home affairs portfolio) and Kong Cho Ha, had served in the government as deputy ministers before.

Chor, a lawyer by training before joining politics, had served under former party president and transport minister Ling Liong Sik as parliamentary secretary (1995-1999) and was promoted as deputy minister of home affairs in 1999. However, he was left out of the cabinet after the 2004 elections.

He retained his Alor Setar parliamentary seat in the recent general elections - he is only MCA candidate to have won in Kedah. He is now back to his old post as deputy minister in

home affairs and internal security.

Kong, who won the Lumut parliamentary seat in Perak, is the new deputy finance minister having previously served in the Science, Technology and Innovation portfolio.

MCA Youth secretary-general Wee Ka Siong made his debut as a deputy minister of education. Meanwhile, Wee Jeck Seng, who was former political secretary to Ka Ting, takes the deputy youth and sports ministerial portfolio.

The newcomers as deputy ministers are Dr Hou Kok Chung (Kluang MP) for Higher Education Ministry and Teng Boon Soon (Tebrau MP) for Culture, Arts, Heritage and National Unity.

Four MCA ministers

MCA has been allotted four cabinet posts and six deputies. But this has not always been so.

In the period between 1955 and 1958, MCA had four cabinet ministers and only one deputy minister.

The four ministers then were Lee Hau Shik (transport), Leong Yew Koh (health and social welfare), Tan Siew Sin (commerce and industry) and Ong Yoke Lin (post and telecommunications). Too Joon Hing was assistant minister of education.

By 1959, Tan was made finance minister. He served in that portfolio for two periods - 1959-69 and 1970-74. Meanwhile, Leong was made minister of justice.

MCA withdrew from the cabinet after its disastrous performance in the 1969 elections. However after the May 13 riots, the situation necessitated the appointment of four MCA leaders as either ministers or deputies by the National Operation Council, which was led by then deputy prime minister Abdul Razak.

MCA rejoined the cabinet on Sept 22, 1970.

By 1974, MCA was given four cabinet posts, three deputies and one parliamentary secretary post. It was also the year, MCA lost its finance portfolio. Later this was increased to four ministers and nine deputies, four parliament secretaries.

For the 2008 cabinet, the party has four ministers and six deputies.