

Some civil servants left in limbo

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They are unsure about their roles or where they belong now

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PETALING JAYA: The new Cabinet may be leaner with just 28 portfolios but it has also left many unsure of where they belong.

With as many as 11 ministries having their names changed – and two left out of the equation – civil servants especially have been left wondering what their functions will be.

For example, the Housing and Local Government Ministry is now the Local Government Development Ministry.

With the term “housing” out, does it mean the ministry no longer oversees housing-related policies?

The Federal Territories Ministry and the Prime Minister’s Department’s Special Functions portfolios have been left out, and ministry staff are unsure if their jobs have been merged with or “parked under” another ministry.

So far, no announcements on the matter have been made.

Several officials from ministries which had seen name changes said they are taking steps to reflect the changes on their official websites and online searches.

“For the Federal Territories Ministry, I think we will know better when the deputy ministers’ line-up is named later.

“For now, we just work as usual,” said a ministry official.



Twenty-eight ministries:
Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim announcing the new Cabinet line-up on Dec 2.

In the new Cabinet, two portfolios that used to be under the Prime Minister’s Department have been upgraded to full ministries – the Economy Ministry and Religious Affairs Ministry.

The new Natural Resources, Environmental and Climate Change Ministry is a merger of two previous ministries – Energy and Natural Resources with Environment and Water.

Political analyst Liew Wui Chern said missing portfolios did not mean the functions were no longer important or relevant, as they are usually merged or remained with the ministry without the full name being spelt out.

“For example, the Local

Government Development Ministry will likely still oversee housing-related policies. At the same, the Tourism Ministry is likely to take charge of arts and culture-related policies.

“It is a leaner Cabinet, so some ministries’ names have also become leaner,” he said.

Tourism Minister Datuk Seri Tiong King Sing, for one, has confirmed that arts and culture will remain under his purview.

“Name stays – Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture (MOTAC). Decision made in the first Cabinet meeting of the Unity Government on Dec 7, 2022,” the Bintulu MP tweeted yesterday.

Liew also said the now-in-limbo

Federal Territories Ministry would likely be merged with the Local Government Development Ministry, as it is “reasonable”.

“With cost-cutting in mind and since there are only three federal territories, merging the ministry will save a lot of resources,” he said.

“It makes sense because Local Government Development Minister Nga Kor Ming and many MPs in Kuala Lumpur are from DAP.”

Liew, from Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman, said it was also proper to do away with the Special Functions portfolio at the Prime Minister’s Department, as it was created to focus on the general election.

On the new Economy Ministry, he

said it would continue the work of the economy portfolio that was placed under the Prime Minister’s Department.

“This ministry will deal more with the macro aspect of the economy and also big data, and Rafizi Ramli’s experience in running a think tank will come in handy,” he said.

As for the new Religious Affairs Ministry, Liew said it would help Anwar with his image as a Muslim leader while thwarting claims that his administration was too friendly with DAP.

He also lauded the new and combined Natural Resources, Environmental and Climate Change Ministry, which could help streamline resources and governance of related portfolios.

“The portfolios in the new Cabinet are easier to understand and more simplified. People can tell what each of them does.

“It is also more sensitive to current concerns, like cost of living, which has been the people’s top concern,” he said.

Datuk Seri Salahuddin Ayub is the Domestic Trade and Cost of Living Minister.

Liew said the current Cabinet was still relatively big, as the ideal one should have between 20 and 22 ministries.

“For example, the Education and Higher Education Ministries can be merged,” he said.