

## Part 1: Why our government needs CPR - Cabinet & Parliamentary Rebalancing

**The Malaysian Cabinet is bloated.** Prime Minister Dato' Sri Najib's Cabinet comprises 30 ministers and 38 deputies. Elsewhere, the entire continent of Australia and the 62 million population of the UK are administered by Cabinets of just 22-23 ministers each. Malaysia has nearly as many ministers as the 33 in India who attend to a nation more than 30 times as populous as ours in a land 10 times larger.

**Our tubby Cabinet is sclerotic.** It is evident that the 68 ministers and their deputies are unable to communicate effectively. For example, the Health Ministry grapples with the issue of too many housemen while the Higher Education Ministry blithely licenses new private medical colleges. Also, the allocation of ministerial responsibilities is bizarre. Is it any wonder that construction standards are shoddy when the financial whizz-kids at the Ministry of Finance are put in charge of licensing contractors?

**PEMANDU just adds more fat.** This unit was set up to 'transform' government and Malaysia. However, it merely creates more duplication, and has also proven to be untrustworthy and unreliable. It has lied to the Malaysian public, and massive calculation errors by its expensive staff and consultants cast serious doubts over its ability as a Performance Management & Delivery Unit.

**Time to rebalance.** The administration has grown corpulent while Parliament has been left with scraps. The lack of parliamentary resources and poor oversight over the ministries has allowed a culture of complacency, and perhaps even arrogance, to develop in the government. The number of ministers and ministries should be streamlined and their resources allocated to more effective uses by Parliament.

PM Najib's Cabinet has 68 ministers and deputy ministers.

It is clear such a large group cannot coordinate and communicate effectively.

We have nearly as many ministers as India, where the population is 1 billion.

Our Cabinet desperately needs streamlining. The resources can be relocated to Parliament.

## Malaysia has too many ministers

At least once every 5 years, we elect a government to administer our country. We expect this government to enact appropriate policies and provide an environment in which we can conduct our day to day activities with ease.

The government divides its many responsibilities among various ministries. For example, we have the Defense Ministry to protect us against external threats, and the Home Ministry in charge of the police force which is tasked with keeping our domestic environment safe and secure.

Division of responsibilities is a normal practice in any organisation. It facilitates efficiency, specialisation and accountability. However, in Malaysia, the reverse is true. Prime Minister (PM) Najib's administration at its peak had a whopping 31 ministers<sup>1</sup> spread across 25 ministries<sup>2</sup>. We have more ministers than ministries. This is compounded by the fact that the prime minister's department alone has six ministers while the Ministry of Finance has two.

The Malaysian Cabinet currently comprises 30 ministers and 38 deputy ministers! In comparison, the United Kingdom and Australian Cabinets have a mere 22 to 23 ministers each. It should be noted that:

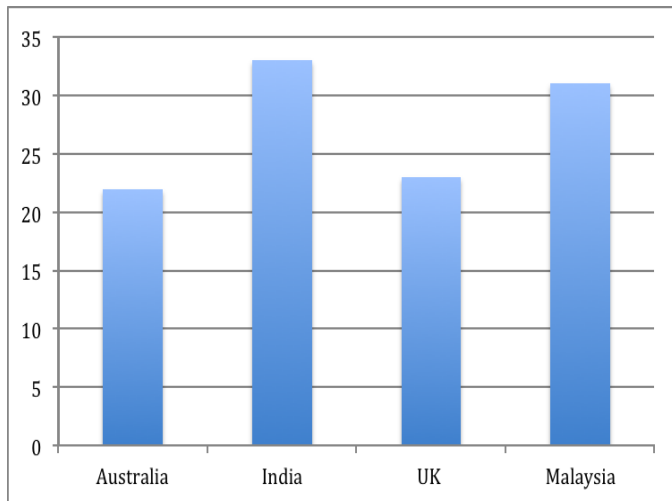
1. The United Kingdom has a far larger population - 62 million vs our 29 million; and
2. Australia is a huge continent covering 7.7 million square kilometres vs our 331,000.

Our current Cabinet of 30 ministers is nearly comparable in size to the 33 in India. However, the 33 Indian ministers administer over 1 *billion* people spread across 3.3 million square kilometres of land. That is a population more than 30 times bigger than Malaysia's, in a land 10 times larger than ours.

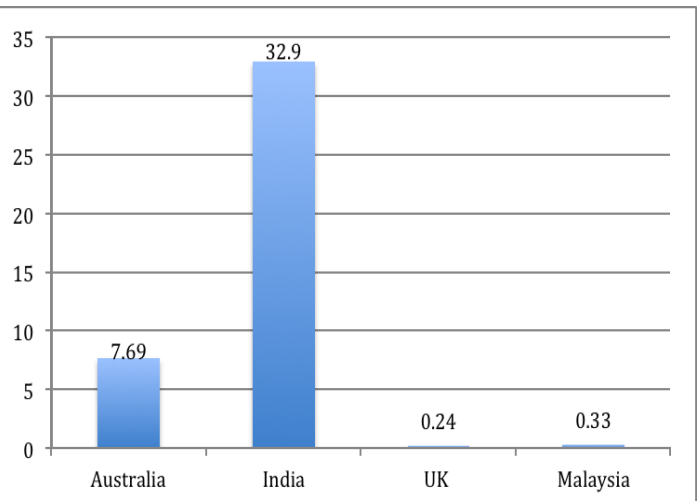
Also, the ministers in the United Kingdom and Australia head multiple ministries. Australia averages about 2 ministers for every 3 ministries whereas the UK average is 5 ministers for every 6 ministries. We, on the other hand, have ministers that outnumber ministries, as well as a huge legion of deputy ministers!

The charts below tell the story:

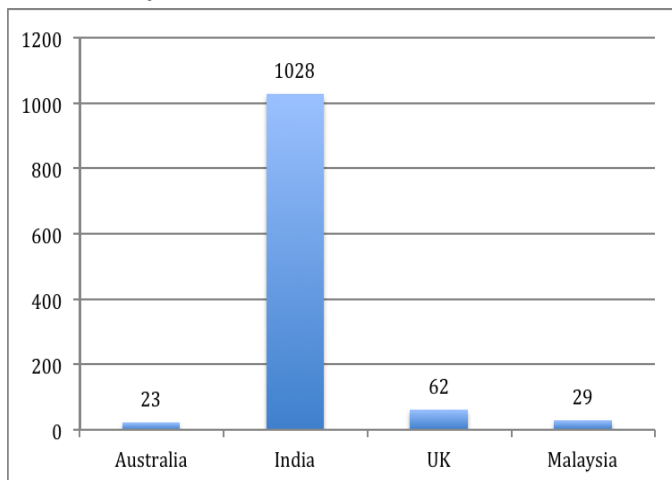
**Figure 1: Malaysia has nearly as many ministers as India...**



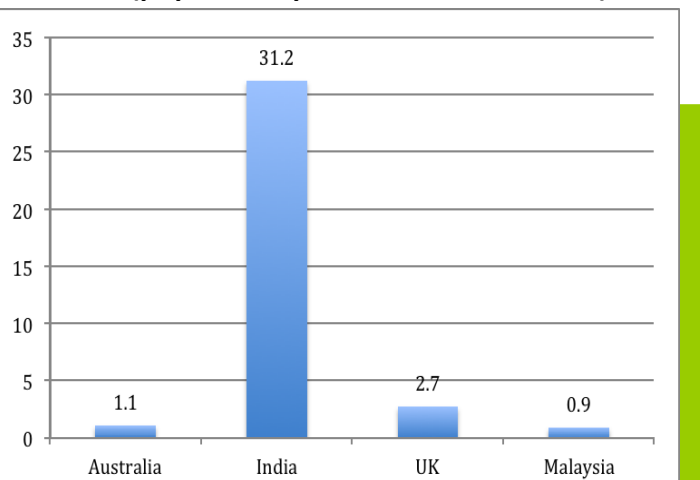
**Figure 2: ... though our country covers a far smaller area ... (size in million square kilometres)**



**Figure 3: .. and has far fewer people (population in millions)**



**Figure 4: Number of people represented by each Minister (population per minister in millions)**



Source for Figures 1 to 4: A Comparative Study of Cabinet Structures and Parliamentary Oversight across Australia, India, the UK and Malaysia. Marie Tan Kiak Li, 6 Jan 2011. Available at [www.refsa.org](http://www.refsa.org)

Australia, India and the UK are used for comparison because their Westminster model of representative government is similar to ours. They also embody governments of developed and developing economies of varying populations and land sizes.

## **Our tubby Cabinet is sclerotic**

Many hands make light work, and indeed, compared to their Commonwealth peers, not only do our Malaysian ministers have fewer citizens to take care of and less ground to cover, they also have fewer ministries to be responsible for.

Yet, this light burden on our ministers does not seem to have resulted in efficient administration of the country. Quite the contrary; given the all-too-numerous examples of inefficiency, wastage and incompetence, it seems too many cooks spoil the broth.

Effective administration of our country is hampered by:

1. Lack of communication and overlaps between ministries; and
2. The bizarre allocation of responsibilities with some ministries being given roles in which they have no natural expertise.

## **Overlapping ministries: Where does one ministry end and another begin?**

With so many ministries in so many roles, there are bound to be many cases of overlap. Also, the subdividing of government executive responsibilities into minutiae can result in each ministry operating in its own silo, and taking a narrow, short-term view of its role.

Take for instance the many housemen (medical graduates) being churned out by private universities. While the Higher Education Ministry blithely licenses more and more medical schools, the Ministry of Health grapples with ensuring adequate clinical training for this huge number of aspiring doctors<sup>3</sup>.

### **KEY TAKEAWAY #1**

Despite our ministers generally having a 'lighter burden' than their foreign counterparts, they do not seem to be performing better.

Or consider the fact that we have three separate science and resource-related ministries:

1. Ministry of Science, Technology & Innovation;
2. Ministry of Natural Resources & Environment; and
3. Ministry of Energy, Green Technology & Water.

How do we determine where innovation ends and green technology begins? And how can we sensibly discuss water issues without bringing in the environment? If, for example, a Malaysian scientist needs government support for an innovative, low-impact hydroelectricity dam, which ministry should he approach?

We also have three ministries covering agriculture and rural issues:

1. Ministry of Plantation Industries and Commodities;
2. Ministry of Agriculture and Agro-based Industry; and
3. Ministry of Rural and Regional Development.

#### KEY TAKEAWAY #2

The large number of ministries, ministers and their deputies results in overlapping responsibilities, lack of clarity and communication breakdown.

Why is the plantations sector not within the Ministry of Agriculture? And aren't agro-based industries closely related to rural development? Which ministry takes precedence if a plantation developer requires government approval and support to plant in an undeveloped, rural area?

#### Even worse: The allocation of responsibilities is bizarre

The problem of overlapping jurisdictions can be mitigated by clear and transparent guidelines and communication, but the existence of the glut of medical housemen suggests even basic communication between ministries appears nonexistent.

More worrying is the bizarre allocation of responsibilities among the ministries. Ministries are now responsible for areas in which they have no natural expertise, which makes administrative competence nearly impossible to attain.

For example, the Ministry of Finance (MoF) runs public transport in Kuala Lumpur. It operates the public bus service and controls the issuance of taxi licenses. One would think these are best handled at local level by Kuala Lumpur City Hall, or, if at federal level, by the Ministry of Transport or the Ministry of Federal Territories and Urban Well-being. Also, amazingly, the Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) is under the purview of the prime minister! Is it any wonder that our public transport system is in such a mess?

Or consider the matter of contractors. It is the MoF that licenses contractors from Class F to Class A, not the Ministry of Works. When the financial whizz-kids at the MoF consider themselves competent to license contractors, is it any surprise that the roof of the Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin Stadium in Terengganu collapsed embarrassingly just a year after its official opening by the Sultan himself<sup>4</sup>?

What is of even more concern is that the Ministry of Housing and Local Government is in charge of licensing money lenders and pawnbrokers<sup>5</sup>. Besides the question of competency, there is also a huge conflict of interest in such a situation. The Ministry is responsible for providing affordable housing, but ironically, the money-lenders it regulates would prefer an environment of high speculation and rising prices!

Is it any surprise then that weak administration and incompetence is the order of the day? How can any government administration be effective when housing pokes its nose into finance, finance into construction, and the PM's department crosses into transport, creating conflicts of interest across the board?

### **PEMANDU merely adds another layer of bureaucratic fat ...**

Prime Minister Najib set up PEMANDU, the Performance Management and Delivery Unit, in 2009, to oversee 1) the Government Transformation Programme (GTP) that aims to improve public services and 2) the Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) to transform Malaysia into a high-income nation by 2020.

Sadly, PEMANDU has turned out to be yet another expensive layer of fat in the government, creating more duplication and bureaucracy. As part of its GTP responsibilities, PEMANDU has various units including, among others, Education, Crime and Public Transport. How these units interact with the various ministries is not always clear. For example, it appears PEMANDU's Education GTP unit contributed little or no input to the important Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 which sets out the Education Ministry's plans and strategies for the next decade.

#### **KEY TAKEAWAY #3**

The bizarre allocation of responsibilities has a negative effect on competence. What do the financial whizz-kids at the Ministry of Finance know about licensing contractors?

Ironically, the leadership of PEMANDU itself can be a comedy of overlap. No less than 3 Ministers in the Prime Minister's Department are involved, at least nominally: Tan Sri Koh Tsu Khoo in his Performance Management role; Senator Datuk Seri Palanivel (Modernisation and Management) and Senator Dato' Sri Idris Jala (CEO of PEMANDU).

Even more appalling, this powerful agency within the prime minister's department has lied to the Malaysian public and its expensive staff and consultants have made massive calculation errors.

Lies as audacious as claiming "100%" credit for the "construction" of a RM1.9 billion wafer-fab plant that does not exist, and errors resulting in projected national income contributions being slashed by 45% - nearly half! - cast serious doubts over its ability as a Performance Management & Delivery Unit<sup>6</sup>.

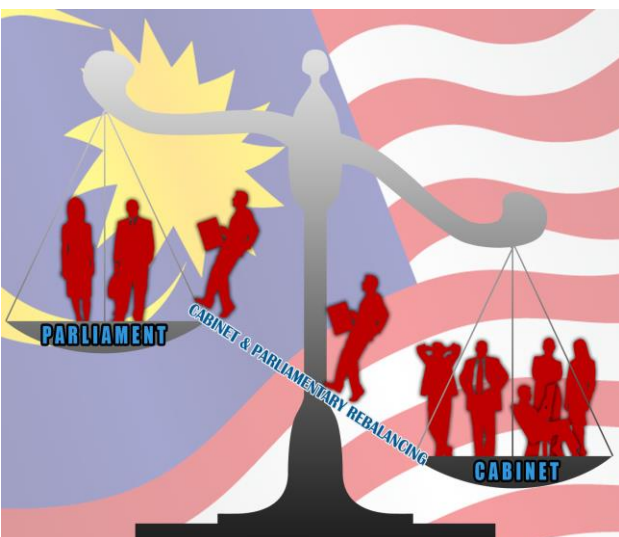
### Time to rebalance ... trim the Cabinet, beef up Parliament

It is self-evident that we cannot reliably evaluate our own performance. It is an issue that goes beyond trust. Even the most honest individual is susceptible to unconscious bias. Hence, it is necessary for a system of checks and balances to be in place to ensure accountability. In an examination, invigilation is essential, and third-party validation is often called for. In a business, shareholders insist that the company, in addition to its own internal controls and audits, has its accounts verified by external auditors.

In this regard, in our system of Westminster-style democracy, the role of Parliament is to act as sentinel, checking and balancing the government administration. Unfortunately, while our administration has grown corpulent, Parliament has been left with scraps.

Our parliament has just 298 staffers and a mere RM82 million budget<sup>7</sup>, while the prime minister's department alone has 29,444 members of staff and RM15 billion of allocations. The lack of parliamentary resources and poor oversight over the ministries has allowed a culture of complacency, and perhaps even arrogance, to develop in the government administration.

In the next Focus Papers in this series, we shall suggest how the number of ministries can be streamlined, and their resources allocated to more effective uses in Parliament.





## Appendix A: Malaysian Ministries, Ministers and Deputy Ministers

	Minister	Portfolio
1	<b>Y.A.B. DATO' SRI MOHD. NAJIB BIN TUN HAJI ABDUL RAZAK</b>	PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF FINANCE, MINISTER OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
2	<b>Y.A.B. TAN SRI DATO' HAJI MUHYIDDIN BIN MOHD. YASSIN</b>	DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, MINISTER OF EDUCATION
3	<b>Y.B. SENATOR DATUK SERI PALANIVEL A/L K. GOVINDASAMY</b>	MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT
4	<b>Y.B. SENATOR TAN SRI DR. KOH TSU KOON</b>	MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT
5	<b>Y.B. DATO' SERI MOHAMED NAZRI BIN ABDUL AZIZ</b>	MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT
6	<b>Y.B. TAN SRI NOR MOHAMED BIN YAKCOP</b>	MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT
7	<b>Y.B. SENATOR MEJAR JENERAL DATO' SERI JAMIL KHIR BIN BAHAROM (B)</b>	MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT
8	<b>Y.B. SENATOR DATO' SRI IDRIS JALA</b>	MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE
9	<b>Y.B. TAN SRI BERNARD GILUK DOMPOK</b>	MINISTER OF PLANTATION INDUSTRIES AND COMMODITIES
10	<b>Y.B. DATO' SERI HISHAMMUDDIN BIN TUN HUSSEIN</b>	MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS
11	<b>Y.B. DATO' SERI UTAMA DR. RAIS YATIM</b>	MINISTER OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE
12	<b>Y.B. DATO' SRI PETER CHIN FAH KUI</b>	MINISTER OF ENERGY, GREEN TECHNOLOGY AND WATER
13	<b>Y.B. DATO' SERI HJ. MOHD SHAFIE BIN HAJI APDAL</b>	MINISTER OF RURAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
14	<b>Y.B. DATO' SERI MOHAMED KHALED BIN NORDIN</b>	MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION
15	<b>Y.B. DATO' SRI MUSTAPA BIN MOHAMED</b>	MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INDUSTRY
16	<b>Y.B. DATUK SERI PANGLIMA DR. MAXIMUS JOHNTY ONGKILI</b>	MINISTER OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION
17	<b>Y.B. DATO SRI DOUGLAS UGGAH EMBAS</b>	MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT
18	<b>Y.B. DATO' SRI DR. NG YEN YEN</b>	MINISTER OF TOURISM
19	<b>Y.B. DATUK SERI HAJI NOH BIN OMAR</b>	MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-BASED INDUSTRY
20	<b>Y.B. DATO' SERI DR. AHMAD ZAHID BIN HAMIDI</b>	MINISTER OF DEFENCE
21	<b>Y.B. DATUK SERI SHAZIMAN BIN ABU MANSOR</b>	MINISTER OF WORKS
22	<b>Y.B. DATO' SRI LIOW TIONG LAI</b>	MINISTER OF HEALTH
23	<b>Y.B. DATO' SRI AHMAD SHABERY CHEEK</b>	MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS
24	<b>Y.B. DATUK SERI DR. S. SUBRAMANIAM</b>	MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCES
25	<b>Y.B. DATO' SRI ISMAIL SABRI BIN YAAKOB</b>	MINISTER OF DOMESTIC TRADE, COOPERATIVE AND CONSUMERISM
26	<b>Y.B. DATO' SERI AHMAD HUSNI BIN MOHAMAD HANADZLAH</b>	MINISTER OF FINANCE (II)
27	<b>Y.B. DATO' SERI KONG CHO HA</b>	MINISTER OF TRANSPORT
28	<b>Y.B. DATO' SRI ANIFAH BIN AMAN</b>	MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
29	<b>Y.B. SENATOR DATO' RAJA NONG CHIK BIN DATO' RAJA ZAINAL ABIDIN</b>	MINISTER OF FEDERAL TERRITORIES AND URBAN WELLBEING
30	<b>Y.B. DATO' SERI CHOR CHEE HEUNG</b>	MINISTER OF HOUSING AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Source of this and the next table: Office of the Prime Minister of Malaysia, Official Portal. <http://www.pmo.gov.my/?menu=cabinet&page=1797>. Retrieved on 13 Jan 2013.

Notice that the Prime Minister's Department houses six ministers, and that only two of those six - Dato' Seri Mohamad Nazri Bin Abdul Aziz and Tan Sri Nor Mohamed Bin Yakcop - were actually elected by the voters of Malaysia. In addition, there are 4 deputy ministers in the Prime Minister's Department as shown in the following table.



	Deputy Minister	Portfolio
1	<b>Y.B. DATO' DEVAMANY A/L S. KRISHNASAMY</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT
2	<b>Y.B. DATUK LIEW VUI KEONG</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT
3	<b>Y.B. DATUK HAJI AHMAD BIN HAJI MASLAN</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT
4	<b>Y.B. TAN SRI DATUK SERI PANGLIMA JOSEPH KURUP</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF NATURAL RESOURCE AND ENVIRONMENT
5	<b>Y.B. DATUK DR. HAJI ABD. LATIFF BIN AHMAD</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF DEFENCE
6	<b>Y.B. DATO' JOSEPH SALANG ANAK GANDUM</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE
7	<b>Y.B. DATUK JOSEPH ENTULU ANAK BELAUN</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF RURAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
8	<b>Y.B. DATO' WIRA MOHD. JOHARI BIN BAHARUM</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-BASED INDUSTRY
9	<b>Y.B. DATUK WIRA ABU SEMAN BIN HAJI YUSOP</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS
10	<b>Y.B. SENATOR DATO' DR. MASHITAH BINTI IBRAHIM</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT
11	<b>Y.B. DATO' YONG KHOON SENG</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF WORKS
12	<b>Y.B. DATUK HAJAH ROHANI BINTI ABDUL KARIM</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF DOMESTIC TRADE, COOPERATIVE AND CONSUMERISM
13	<b>Y.B. DATO' NORIAH BINTI KASNON</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
14	<b>Y.B. DATO' JACOB DUNGAU SAGAN</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INDUSTRY
15	<b>Y.B. DATUK IR. DR. WEE KA SIONG</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION
16	<b>Y.B. TUAN JELAING ANAK MERSAT</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF TRANSPORT
17	<b>Y.B. DATUK HAJI FADILLAH BIN YUSOF</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION
18	<b>Y.B. DATO' TAN LIAN HOE</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF DOMESTIC TRADE, COOPERATIVE AND CONSUMERISM
19	<b>Y.B. DATUK SARAVANAN A/L MURUGAN</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF FEDERAL TERRITORIES AND URBAN WELLBEING
20	<b>Y.B. SENATOR TUAN A. KOHILAN PILLAY A/L G. APPU</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
21	<b>Y.B. DATO' DR. HOU KOK CHUNG</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION
22	<b>Y.B. DATO' HAMZAH BIN ZAINUDIN</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF PLANTATION INDUSTRIES AND COMMODITIES
23	<b>Y.B. DATO' SAIFUDDIN BIN ABDULLAH</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF HIGHER EDUCATION
24	<b>Y.B. DATO' HASAN BIN MALEK</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF RURAL AND REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT
25	<b>Y.B. SENATOR DATO' MAZNAH BINTI MAZLAN</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCES
26	<b>Y.B. DATUK ABD RAHIM BIN BAKRI</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF TRANSPORT
27	<b>Y.B. SENATOR DATO' DR. AWANG ADEK HUSSEIN</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF FINANCE
28	<b>Y.B. DATUK ROSNAH BINTI HAJI ABDUL RASHID SHIRLIN</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF HEALTH
29	<b>Y.B. DR. HAJI MOHD. PUAD BIN ZARKASHI</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF EDUCATION
30	<b>Y.B. DATO' RAZALI HJ. IBRAHIM</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS
31	<b>Y.B. DATO' MUKHRIZ BIN TUN DR. MAHATHIR</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AND INDUSTRY
32	<b>Y.B. DATO' LEE CHEE LEONG</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF HOME AFFAIRS
33	<b>Y.B. DATO' DR. JAMES DAWOS MAMIT</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF TOURISM
34	<b>Y.B. SENATOR DATO' IR. DONALD LIM SIANG CHAI</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF FINANCE
35	<b>Y.B. SENATOR DATUK MAGLIN DENNIS D'CRUZ</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF INFORMATION, COMMUNICATION AND CULTURE
36	<b>Y.B. SENATOR TUAN GAN PING SIEU</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF YOUTH AND SPORTS
37	<b>Y.B. DATUK RICHARD RIOT ANAK JAEM</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS
38	<b>Y.B. DATUK CHUA TEE YONG</b>	DEPUTY MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND AGRO-BASED INDUSTRY

## Acknowledgement

This Focus Paper draws heavily from the report [A Comparative Study of Cabinet Structures and Parliamentary Oversight across Australia, India, the UK and Malaysia](#), commissioned by REFSA and undertaken and completed by Marie Tan Kiak Li on 6 Feb 2011. The study is available for free download at [www.refsa.org](http://www.refsa.org).

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## Other Information

The information in this report has been obtained from and is based upon sources that are believed to be reliable but no guarantee is made as to accuracy and completeness.

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<sup>1</sup> It has now fallen to 30 ministers as PM Najib assumed the helm of the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development following the resignation of the then Senator Dato' Seri Shahrizat in Apr 2012.

<sup>2</sup> We include the Prime Minister's Department as a Ministry because its RM15 billion budget allocation and 6 ministers (excluding the PM) and 4 deputy ministers dwarves many other ministries.

<sup>3</sup> Houseman glut. Loh Foon Fong, 27 Nov 2010. Available at [www.mystarjob.com](http://www.mystarjob.com). Retrieved on 14 Jan 2013.

<sup>4</sup> The stadium roof collapsed in June 2009, just thirteen months after its official opening in May 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Housing & Local Government, Official Portal. See [www.kpkt.gov.my/kpkt\\_bi/index.php/pages/view/64](http://www.kpkt.gov.my/kpkt_bi/index.php/pages/view/64). Retrieved on 10 January 2012.

<sup>6</sup> More shocking details of elementary calculation errors, questionable practices and perception manipulation are available in our 15-part Focus Paper series and related infographics. Search for "ETP" at [www.refsa.org](http://www.refsa.org).

<sup>7</sup> Staff numbers from Senarai Perjawatan 2013 (Jilid 1). Budgets from Anggaran Perbelanjaan Persekutuan 2013.