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The upcoming slate of nine Nominated Members of Parliament (NMPs):

Top row, L-R: Professor Lim Sun Sun, head of humanities, arts and social sciences at Singapore University of Technology and Design; Ms Yip Pin Xiu, Paralympian swimmer; Mr Abbas Ali Mohamed Irshad, founder of inter-religious non-profit group Roses of Peace;

Center row L-R: Mr Arasu Duraisamy, veteran labour unionist; Mr Douglas Foo Peow Yong, Sakae Holdings chairman; Mr Ho Wee San, executive director of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra.

Bottom row, L-R: Associate professor Walter Edgar Theseira, labour economist at the Singapore University of Social Sciences; Ms Anthea Ong Lay Theng, social entrepreneur; Ms Irene Quay Siew Ching, president of the Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore.

SINGAPORE — For the first time, there will be two candidates under the age of 30 among the new batch of nine Nominated Members of Parliament (NMPs), with Paralympic swimmer Yip Pin Xiu set to be the youngest person to take up the post at the age of 26.

The other is Mr Abbas Ali Mohamed Irshad, 29, founder of inter-religious non-profit group Roses of Peace.

In a statement on Monday (Sept 17), the Special Select Committee overseeing the appointments said that the names of the nine individuals have been presented to President Halimah Yacob. She will formally appoint them at the Istana on Sept 26, with the NMPs then taking their oaths at the next Parliament sitting.

All NMPs now serving will step down when their terms end on Sept 21.

The NMP scheme was introduced in 1990 as a means to provide independent and non-partisan views during parliamentary debates. NMPs cannot be members of a political party.

Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, chairman of the Special Select Committee and Speaker of Parliament, said that the nine nominees have fulfilled all constitutional criteria and requirements for eligibility. The committee is also confident that the individuals will be able to represent the views within and across their communities, he said.

TWO YOUNGER MEMBERS

This year's cohort will have two NMPs under the age of 30. Previously, the youngest individual to assume the post was Ms Eunice Olsen at the age of 27 in November 2004.

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Besides running a non-profit group, Mr Irshad is also a youth ambassador with the Government feedback unit Reach and was formerly the founding president of Singapore Management University's Apolitical Society, where students discussed issues on politics and civil society.

He said that his experience of working with young people gives him an understanding of issues affecting that segment of society. "Though age is important, and experience is important, but my 'value-add' is to be the voice of youth and to give a young person's perspective on issues," he added.

Similarly, Ms Yip — a three-time Paralympic gold medallist — felt that she could provide perspectives of issues from the "point of view" of young Singaporeans.

"Also, the road that I've travelled is not something that others might have gone through. My experiences are unique, and I want to share them and hopefully make a better Singapore," she said.

Singapore Management University's law professor Eugene Tan said that both Ms Yip and Mr Abbas "will bring their youthful idealism and be a voice for young Singaporeans with them" as NMPs.

Political analyst Felix Tan, an associate lecturer with SIM Global Education, said that though the pair might be inexperienced in areas such as Singapore's economy and on entrepreneurship, "they can bring to the table their valuable perspectives on sports as well as support for the disabled and inter-religious harmony, which are also very important areas that Singaporeans and the Government can examine much deeper".

TODAY finds out from the candidates what stepping forward to be an NMP mean for them.

Mr Arasu Duraisamy, 50, general secretary of the Singapore Port Workers' Union

"A topic that is close to my heart is tripartism in Singapore. The tripartite relationship (among the workers, employers and Government) at the national level is a strong one. However, more can be done to infuse and permeate the same level of trust and collaboration at the middle-management level. We can do more to educate and raise awareness on how tripartism at the sectoral level and the middle-management level can be a valuable one."

Mr Abbas Ali Mohamed Irshad, 29, founder of inter-religious non-profit group Roses of Peace

"I would like to advocate greater inclusion for youth to take part in activities that can help them understand religious harmony in Singapore. I would also like to raise issues such as the cost of living and the mismatch of jobs and skills."

Mr Douglas Foo Peow Yong, 49, chairman of restaurant chain Sakae Holdings

"Singapore's economy is at a very interesting juncture because of the digital and market disruptions. I hope to help enterprises be more future-ready, by incorporating digital solutions so that they can keep pace with the changing demand and upgrade (the skills of) their workers so that they will not be displaced."

Mr Ho Wee San, 49, executive director of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra

"I hope to be a voice for the traditional arts, as well as a resource and advocate. More support is needed for the traditional art forms because they are still under-appreciated and under-developed in Singapore. The arts can play a role in serving disadvantaged communities that are under-served."

Professor Lim Sun Sun, 46, head of humanities, arts and social sciences at the Singapore University of Technology and Design

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"I hope to raise issues related to the impact of digitisation on society, especially in the workplace: The "digital-readiness" of our citizens, the increasing gender diversity in the technology sector, and how to foster media literacy in an increasingly diverse media landscape."

Ms Anthea Ong Lay Theng, 50, social entrepreneur and founder of Hush TeaBar, a teahouse run by the hearing-impaired

"I will raise issues on social inclusion, mental health and volunteerism. For instance, the increasing polarisation of views on so many social issues is disconcerting and can split our society at its core. How can we ensure we have more safe spaces to engage in difficult and divisive conversations?"

Ms Irene Quay Siew Ching, 43, president of the Pharmaceutical Society of Singapore

"Among the issues I would like to raise is the advancement of allied health professionals and community pharmacists for collaborative practice, and promote a safe and just culture to enhance patient safety, as well as encourage healthcare workers to talk about mistakes and to learn from them. As a working mother, I would like to suggest ways to improve the existing support framework for working mothers."

Associate Professor Walter Edgar Theseira, 40, labour economist at the Singapore University of Social Sciences

"I think I'm best positioned to contribute to discussions on transport, retirement and housing, and the labour market and education. These are topics which matter to me and many Singaporeans, and where we need a common understanding of economic and financial realities to move ahead when debating policies."

Ms Yip Pin Xiu, 26, Paralympian swimmer

"I will mostly represent the sports community, but I think I can also talk about issues affecting youth and women. When it comes to sports, I would like to talk about creating a better sporting culture where students, in particular, are encouraged to exercise and are exposed to different types of sports regardless of their backgrounds. Hopefully, they can then find a sport they enjoy."