

**MAYOR-DESIGNATE OF CENTRAL SINGAPORE CDC SAYS HER HEART IS 'STILL WITH THE DISADVANTAGED'**

# Denise Phua will continue to be vocal champion for social issues

XUE JIANYUE  
xuejianyue@mediacorp.com.sg

**SINGAPORE** – Even after she takes political office next month, Ms Denise Phua, 54, plans to continue being a vocal champion for social issues and the special needs sector.

Noting that her heart is “still with the disadvantaged”, the Mayor-designate of Central Singapore Community Development Council (CDC) said she spent a week mulling over whether to take over from Mr Sam Tan when she was approached to take the office earlier this month.

“I wanted to be sure I can add value and contribute to the CDC’s mission.

I intend to continue to speak up on issues I feel strongly about and to influence more changes in the back room, too, to make a difference,” Ms Phua told TODAY.

Ms Phua’s appointment was announced yesterday as part of several changes that Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong is making to his Cabinet.

Ms Phua entered politics in 2006 and became known as a vocal advocate for the disadvantaged. Two similarly vocal backbenchers who were promoted to political office in recent years were Dr Amy Khor and Madam Halimah Jacob.

Ms Phua was also held as an example to her party colleagues as the

People’s Action Party (PAP) set about reinventing itself to become less centralised and more interactive after the 2011 General Election.

Her passionate advocacy for those with special needs caught the attention of Mr Lee — who is also PAP’s secretary-general — as he lauded her for working from within the party in pushing for change.

Commenting on her appointment, Singapore Management University law don Eugene Tan said Ms Phua was well-known, well-liked and would add “a strong human dimension” to her mayoral duties. “Given her popularity and willingness to speak her mind, it’s also timely for Ms Phua to take on



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bigger responsibilities and leverage on her common touch,” he said.

Apart from Ms Phua, the other backbencher promoted to political office is Sengkang West Member of Parliament Lam Pin Min. He will become Minister of State (Health) in August.

The 44-year-old eye specialist was taken out of Ang Mo Kio GRC after one term and fielded in the single-seat ward, which he won.

The director of Paediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus Services at Mount Alvernia Hospital’s Eagle Eye Centre said he would be giving up his medical practice for the political office. “It was not an easy decision as I have always enjoyed seeing patients, especially the little children,” said Dr Lam.

Having spent eight years in the Government Parliamentary Committee (Health) and two decades as a doctor, Dr Lam said he was familiar with many healthcare concerns and would be able to add value to the Health Ministry’s efforts to review existing policies and develop new models of care.