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Background Brief:

Vietnam's Likely New State Leaders and Cabinet Members

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The Central Committee of the Vietnam Communist Party (thirteenth tenure) held its second plenary session from March 8-9. At this meeting the Central Committee voted on the Politburo's recommendations for state President, Prime Minister and the Chair of the National Assembly. In addition, the Central Committee also voted on Politburo recommendations for ministerial level appointments to the Cabinet and other central state agencies.

According to the Vietnam Government Portal (March 15, 2021), the current 14th National Assembly will hold its eleventh and final working session from March 24-April 8. This session officially will elect the new state president, vice president, prime minister, deputy prime ministers, Chair of the National Assembly, deputy chairs of the National Assembly, members of the Cabinet, Chief Justice of the Supreme People's Court of Viet Nam, and Prosecutor General of the Supreme People's Procuracy.

On 18 March, the Vietnam Fatherland Front Central Committee held its second consultative conference to draw up a preliminary list of candidates from central agencies to stand for election to the 15th legislature of the National Assembly in May.

The table below set out the presumptive (unofficial) list of likely candidates for these state and government positions after the above meetings.

This list confirms that Pham Minh Chinh will be the next prime minister. He will be assisted by five Deputy Prime Ministers. Foreign Minister Pham Binh Minh, who has served two-terms, has been promoted to Standing Deputy Prime Minister. Vu Duc Dam, who was not elected to the Politburo, retains his post as Deputy Prime Minister, while three new Deputy Prime Ministers have been appointed: Nguyen Hoa Binh, Le Minh Khai and Le Van Thanh.

The list also confirms that Vuong Dinh Hue will be Chair of the National Assembly. He will be assisted by Tran Thanh Man as Deputy Chair.

Of the remaining twenty-two members of the Cabinet, eleven ministers were retained, five deputy ministers were promoted to minister, and six new members were appointed.

The new Minister of National Defence, Phan Van Giang, returns to the normal pattern of promoting the most senior general, the Chief of the General Staff, whose

background is in the combat arms (infantry, armour, artillery), to be minister. The outgoing minister, Ngo Xuan Lich, was the head of the General Political Department.

The presumptive Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bui Thanh Son, follows his predecessor in having earned an M.A degree in the United States at Columbia University. Pham Binh Minh was educated at the School of Law and Diplomacy at Fletcher University. But unlike Binh, Son was not elected to the Politburo.

There are two “surprises” on the Cabinet list circulated prior to the 2nd plenum. The inclusion of Phung Xuan Nha is surprising considering that his first term as Minister of Education and Training was marked by a number of scandals in the school system and against Nha personally. Nha failed to get re-elected to the Central Committee at the 13th national party congress earlier this year.¹ Nha appears to have been replaced by Nguyen Kim Son, the head of the Vietnam National University in Hanoi as presumptive minister.

The second surprise is the inclusion of Nguyen Thanh Nghi, the eldest son of former Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung. Nghi was Deputy Minister of Construction from 2011-14. He was then transferred to Kien Giang province where he served as deputy secretary and then chairman of the province before rising to provincial party secretary in October 2015. In August 2020, dozens of provincial officials were disciplined for administrative irregularities. Two months later Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc transferred Nghi back to his previous post as Deputy Minister of Construction.²

Presumptive Vietnam Government Leaders and Cabinet Ministers 2021

Leadership/Ministry	Presumptive nhân sự dự kiến	Current Position
Prime Minister	Pham Minh Chinh	Politburo member
Standing Deputy Prime Minister DPM	Pham Binh Minh	Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Deputy Prime Minister	Nguyen Hoa Binh	Chief Justice of Supreme People’s Court Politburo
Deputy Prime Minister	Le Minh Khai	Inspector-General Government Inspectorate
Deputy Prime Minister	Vu Duc Dam	Deputy Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister	Le Van Thanh	Deputy Minister Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs
Defence	Phan Van Giang	Deputy Minister, Chief of the General Staff Vietnam People’s Army
Public Security	To Lam	Minister of Public Security
Foreign Affairs	Bui Thanh Son	Standing Deputy Minister

¹ Cao Nguyên, ‘Giáo dục Việt Nam trượt dài suốt 5 năm nhiệm kỳ bộ trưởng Phùng Xuân Nhạ,’ Radio Free Asia, March 16, 2021. https://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/vietnam-education-going-down-during-5-year-term-of-nha-03162021174014.html.

² “Ông Nguyễn Thanh Nghị được ‘điều chuyển’ hay bị ‘kỷ luật giáng chức?’” Radio Free Asia, October 6, 2020. https://www.rfa.org/vietnamese/in_depth/mr-nguyen-thanh-nghi-is-transferred-or-demoted-10062020132257.html.

Justice	Le Thanh Long	Minister of Justice
Finance	Ho Duc Phuc	Auditor General
Industry and Trade	Nguyen Hoang Anh	Chairman of the special committee to manage State Capital at enterprises
Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs MLWISW	Dao Ngoc Dung	Minister Labour, War Invalids and Social Affairs
Transport	Nguyen Van The	Minister of Transport
Construction MOC	Nguyen Thanh Nghi	Deputy Minister of Construction
Information and Communication	Nguyen Manh Hung	Minister of Information and Communication
Education and Training	Nguyen Kim Son	Head Vietnam National University-Hanoi
Agriculture and Rural Development MARD	Le Minh Hoang	Deputy Minister Agriculture and Rural Development
Planning and Investment MPI	Nguyen Chi Dung	Minister Planning and Investment with Exemption
Home Affairs	Pham Thi Thanh Tra	Deputy Minister of Home Affairs
Health	Nguyen Thanh Long	Minister of Health
Science and Technology MOST	Huynh Thanh Dat	Minister of Science and Technology
Culture, Sports, Tourism MCST	Nguyen Van Hung	Deputy Minister Culture, Sport and Tourism
Natural Resources and Environment	Tran Hong Ha	Minister Natural Resources and Environment
Government Office	Nguyen Van Son	Deputy Minister Ministry of Public Security (?)
Government Inspectorate	Doan Hong Phong	Secretary of the Party Committee of Nam Dinh
State Bank Vietnam SBV	Nguyen Thi Hong	Governor State Bank of Vietnam
Committee on Ethnic Minority Affairs	Han A Lenh	Vice President and General Secretary Vietnam Fatherland Front (VFF)
Chairman National Assembly	Vuong Dinh Hue	Politburo member
Deputy Chairman National Assembly Standing Committee	Tran Thanh Man	Chairman VFF, Politburo member

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