

# Issue of succession planning resurfaces at Public Bank's AGM

*Bank allays concerns over succession planning with 2 new appointments of independent non-Eds*

by **TANU PANDEY**

**ALLAYING** concerns over its succession planning, Public Bank Bhd yesterday said the group has an ongoing succession planning programme and the latest appointments to the board reflect the intention of the group to infuse new members to the board.

With the majority members in Public Bank's board above 70 years of age, the issue of succession planning at the bank has been resurfacing for almost two years.

"The appointments of new independent non-EDs (Lai Wan, 70 and Lai Wai Keen, 59) reflect the board's intention to infuse new members," said Tan Sri Thong Yaw Hong at the bank's 48th AGM in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Thong was replying to a query from a shareholder who



(From left) Thong, Teh and Tay acknowledge shareholders at Public Bank's 48th AGM in Kuala Lumpur yesterday

had asked about the bank's plans for the succession of top positions in the board.

Lai Wan was appointed to the board in April 2012 and Lai Wai Keen in May 2012. Apart from these new members, the bank also designated Quah Poh Keat as the bank's deputy CEO. Many see Quah's ap-

pointment as a move towards succession planning.

At the helm of the bank are Public Bank's non-executive chairman Tan Sri Dr Teh Hong Piow and co-chairman Tan Sri Thong Yaw Hong, both 83 years old. The CEO and MD of the bank Tan Sri Tay Ah Lek and two other non-independ-

ent non-EDs are above 70.

Public Bank's success has been closely linked to chairman Teh while the succession planning is seen as an issue for the bank compared to other large banks in the country.

In fact, Minority Shareholders Watchdog Group (MSWG)

had once suggested that the board formalise a succession plan and many others are calling out for younger directors. The bank, however, has not yet announced a formal plan to that effect.

Meanwhile, there was also a question on gender diversity at the board, to which Thong said: "Appointment of Ms Lai Wai Kin reflects the intention of the board to bring gender diversity. It is an initial step by the board to achieve a more gender diverse board."

He further added that the board will "of course" keep identifying "fit and proper ladies" for appointment of independent non-EDs, subject to approval of Bank Negara Malaysia.

The clamouring for gender diversity is backed by the government's policy for corporate Malaysia to have at least 30% of its boardroom members comprised of women by 2016. This means that an institution like Public Bank should have at least three women directors in its board of nine.