

# "thisweek

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# MILES FROM HOME

Many travel long distances, leaving loved ones and the place they call home, to seek a living in Singapore so their families can have a better life. Some come with more than suitcases, with debts already chalked up in order to be here to work. And a few get less than they bargained for or imagined.

For these, there is the Migrant Workers' Centre.

*NTUC This Week* goes behind the scenes to see how the team at the Centre has been helping foreign workers facing problems at the workplace.



# Game Changers

The Migrant Workers' Centre is hard at work to right the wrongs for a number of foreign workers facing issues at the workplace. Here are a few real life cases, up close and personal.

By **Joshua Joseph**

**W**hen he injured his hand at the workplace, Mr Sadek Late (pictured below), ran away from his employer for fear he would be repatriated. Little did he know that his work permit and housing arrangement had been cancelled once his employer found him missing.

The 44-year-old cable electrician from a construction firm went to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) to lodge his work injury claim, and was subsequently referred to the Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC).

MWC made efforts to immediately provide Mr Sadek with accommodation and meals for two days while waiting for his employer to make similar arrangements.

Mr Sadek is just one of the many faces behind the cases that MWC has been dealing with since they started operations in 2009.

The Centre reaches out to migrant workers in many ways that include shelter, advice and assistance in seeking remedies against unfair employment practices.

## CATERING TO BASIC NEEDS

In one case, the Centre even helped to provide a total of 4,945 meals when it was alerted to the plight of some 250 migrant workers. The workers were told in November last year that their services were no longer required as their company Interprime Contractors Pte Ltd was filing for Creditor Voluntary Liquidation with effect from 20 December 2013. The situation was indeed a dire one for these workers as the company had owed them salaries ranging from two to three months.

When alerted on 13 November 2013 that the company had defaulted on the foreign workers' levy and salaries for months, a team of three officers from MWC rushed down to the company's premises to



The MWC Team, left to right: Bernard Menon, Executive Director; Peh Hui Wen, Senior Manager; Kavitha d/o Sundram Rajoo; Suzanne Nathan, Specialist; Reshma Basu, Specialist; Ben Choy, Specialist; Jackson Tan, Manager; Francis Lim, Senior Specialist; Hans Goh Toh Han, Executive Director.

see if they could provide humanitarian assistance. However, the MWC team was denied entry to the company's office and compound.

The team did not give up and persevered in their wait at the entrance of the company, and that paid off as the team caught sight of a group of workers. The MWC team introduced themselves and shared how the Centre could help. The workers were at a loss and unsure if they could get back their owed salaries. They were also anxious to know if there were other work arrangements being made for them.

"We did not know what to do. There was no salary for three months. It was difficult to go out and also this time, Deepavali was coming and we had no money to send back home to our family," said worker Mr Thirupathi.

Following their visit, the MWC team kept a close watch on proceedings as the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) worked with the company's Managing Director to resolve the payment of salary arrears. The team also updated



An MWC Officer giving advice to the affected workers of Interprime Contractors.

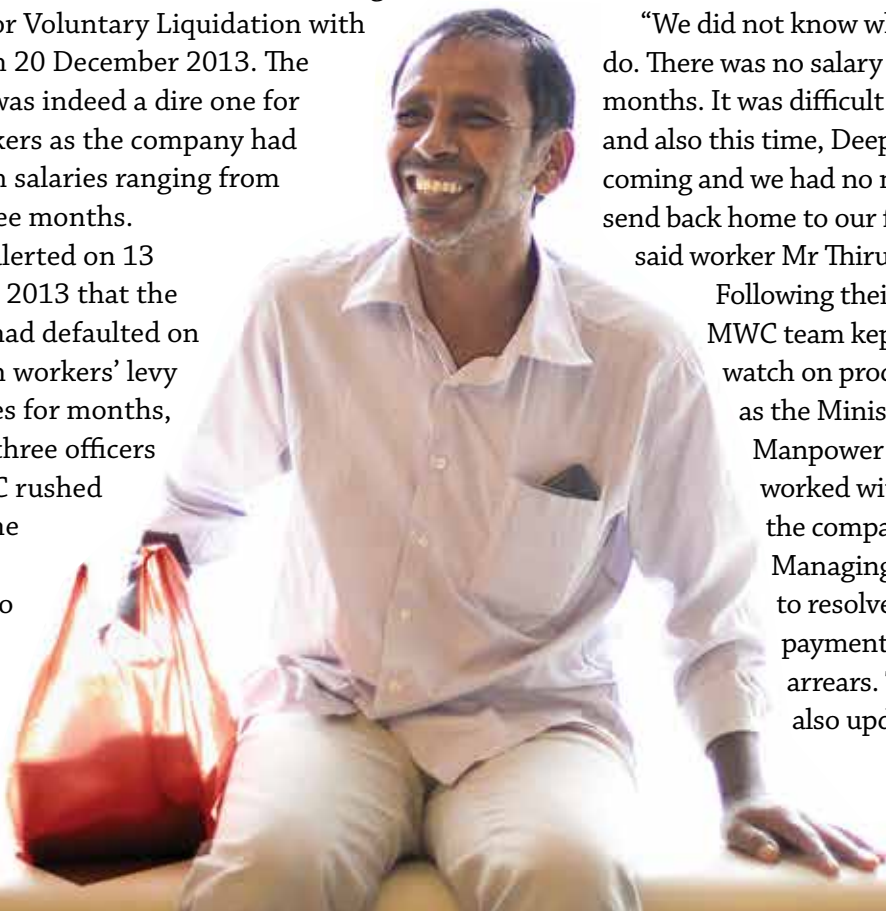
the workers on the arrangements for them to either find new employment or to be repatriated.

## HELPING IN TIME OF NEED

The MWC team also learned that the catering of food to the workers had been terminated due to an arrear in payment and the workers had not eaten the day before. The team reacted quickly by going out to buy 100 packets of *nasi briyani* for the workers. They also called up existing vendors to resume catering food for the workers.

Mr Thirupathi and other workers were also able to find new employment elsewhere while the remaining workers were housed by the company and were provided with food by MWC till they were repatriated.

"I am happy that I got my salary back and also for MWC to have given us food during this time," he said.



Mr Sadek Late is just one of the many faces behind the cases that MWC has been dealing with.

# Home, With A Smile

In this story, a foreign worker suffering more than a bad deal at the workplace gets his smile and faith restored before going home.

By **Nicholas Lee**

**V**erbally abused, spat on and left to fend for himself – nothing could have prepared 40-year-old Zhang Jianmin for this fate before he left his home in China to head out to Singapore to seek work.

Shortly after his father lost his battle with cancer, Mr Zhang packed his bags for our shores, and eventually landed a job in a motor workshop as a workshop assistant. But this stint did not last long.

A month and a half into the job, Mr Zhang found himself a victim of workplace abuse. Together with his fellow compatriots working in the workshop, he was verbally abused, pushed and physically shoved. In one instance, he injured his finger while doing waste removal one night and had to pay for his own medical treatment.

And if that was not bad enough, his dormitory living condition was none the better.

“Workers were eating in the dormitories and rats could be seen running around, so the hygiene condition was terrible,” shared Mr Zhang.

## MWC TO THE RESCUE

Fearing for his own safety, Mr Zhang left the dormitory to seek assistance before his employer got violent. With nowhere to go and no one to turn to, Mr Zhang spent the night at an MRT station and had to scavenge for unfinished food and drinks at a nearby coffee shop.

After spending two nights on his own, Mr Zhang made his



A visibly happy and relieved Mr Zhang (middle) sharing a light moment with MWC officers before heading to the airport for his flight home.

way to the Migrant Workers' Centre after running out of other options. There, he met MWC Manager Mr Jackson Tan who was on duty and who offered immediate help.

“When Mr Zhang first came to us, he was quite calm and composed, but as he started to talk about his predicament, he began to break down and cry,” said Mr Tan.

When the team at MWC learnt about Mr Zhang's situation, they immediately arranged accommodation and meals for him.

With the help of MWC, Mr Zhang managed to recover \$1,000 in salary arrears. After much thought, Mr Zhang decided that he did not want to stay on in Singapore but to return to China.

On the day that Mr Zhang was to leave Singapore, he paid MWC a visit to thank the team for their assistance.

“He came in with a smile on his face and we could sense the relief in him. You could see that he was truly thankful and grateful for the help that was rendered to him,” added Mr Tan.

## HOMeward BOUND

“I am very fortunate that MWC was able to offer prompt assistance... I wish to express my heartfelt appreciation to MWC,” said Mr Zhang.

“I feel that MWC's mission is to touch a person's life and especially so for the migrant workers, and in this case, seeing him from the time he came in till we sent him off at the airport was really an achievement for MWC and for me,” shared Mr Tan.

“When Mr Zhang first came to us, he was quite calm and composed, but as he started to talk about his predicament, he began to break down and cry.” – Migrant Workers' Centre Manager, Mr Jackson Tan.

## QUICK LOOK

### ABOUT THE MIGRANT WORKERS' CENTRE

- Cater for subsistence, shelter and other immediate needs of needy or distressed migrant workers.
- Provide advice and assistance to migrant workers seeking remedies against unfair employment practices.
- Facilitate social acceptance and integration through outreach activities, community engagement, advocacy and public education.
- Provide opportunities for social interaction and upgrading for migrant workers to promote social integration and greater responsibility for migrant workers.

**For assistance, call MWC's Hotline at Tel: 6536 2692**



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ANDROID

# Snapshots

A quick round up of what went on in and around the Labour Movement in the week.

## Progressive Wage A Winner

Find out why Singapore's Progressive Wage Model is the model of choice when it comes to uplifting the lives of the lower income.

*Read the full story on page 6.*



## Workers To Get Payslips

The releasing of the Tripartite Guidelines on Issuance of Itemised Payslips on 13 January 2014 was welcomed by the Labour Movement as more workers will get to understand their pay packets better.

*Read the full story on page 8.*

## Servant Leaders Amongst Us

Eight leaders from the Building Construction and Timber Industries' Employees' Union (BATU) who stepped aside to make way for new blood and a women leader from the Union of Power and Gas Employees (UPAGE) are lauded for their roles in the Labour Movement.

*Read the full stories on page 10 (BATU) and 11 (UPAGE).*



## Foreign Fishermen Get Help Centre

Migrant fishermen on Singapore's shores can now seek assistance on employment-related issues or simply have a rest at the newly-opened Seafarers' Welfare Centre in Jurong Fishery Port. The Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC) launched the welfare-cum-help centre on 10 January this year.

## A Sporty Start For The New Year

Building Construction and Timber Industries' Employees' Union (BATU) rolled out the year with a cricket event at the Ceylon Sports Club for its foreign workers on 5 January 2014. Joining hands with the Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC), the union brought together some 200 foreign workers at this annual activity. These are part of BATU's efforts to continuously engage its members and strengthen its relationship with management partners.



## Prosecur Awards 60 Talent Scholarships

Union of Security Employees branch Prosecur awarded some 60 scholarship awards to employees' children in Singapore as part of its global 'Prosecur Talent Scholarships' programme. It is the only company in the security market with such a scholarship initiative in place for the children of its employees. More than 250 local students have benefitted since the company first awarded the scholarships in Singapore three years ago.

## A Zoo Treat For The Elderly

Last December, about 18 female residents of St Andrew's Cathedral Home for the Aged enjoyed a fun trip to the Singapore Zoological Gardens, courtesy of the NatSteel Employees' Union (NEU). Many of them expressed gratitude as they had not been to the zoo for decades. It was also a heartwarming experience for the volunteers to see the delight on the residents' faces. The union also treated them to a buffet lunch and distributed additional gifts of household provisions and goodie bags.





### Bringing Joy To The Disabled

For the second year in a row, the National Taxi Association (NTA) brought cheer to some 96 residents of the Red Cross Home for the Disabled. Apart from entertaining the residents with a variety of performances, including a special singing and dance performance from the Da De Maitreya Moral Society, volunteers also gave the Home's staff a much-needed break by taking care of the residents for the day.

As most of the residents are unable to eat independently, NTA volunteers fed them with food specially prepared for their special diets. The volunteers also toured the facility to find out more about the difficulties faced by the residents and how the union could provide more assistance.

### Young Unionists Share Views On MediShield Life

How will MediShield Life affect you? Some 30 Young NTUC members came together on 8 January 2014 to find out more about its impact on the lives of Singaporeans. Their views will be shared with the Ministry of Health (MOH) for its review on the scheme this year.

MediShield Life, which aims to provide lifetime insurance coverage for all Singapore residents, was first mentioned by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong during the 2013 National Day Rally, and is expected to be introduced by the Ministry of Health (MOH) in 2015.

Topics raised included improving Medishield Life to give more assurance to Singaporeans, ensuring premiums remained affordable for all, low awareness of MediFund which could confuse the public, the need for more education on the schemes and various integrated plans, and possible coverage for dental care.

Interested to learn more about MediShield Life? Check out [www.moh.gov.sg/content/moh\\_web/medishield-life.html](http://www.moh.gov.sg/content/moh_web/medishield-life.html). The Labour Movement will be sharing the views of its communities and union leaders on MediShield Life later this year.



## LNY SPECIAL DEALS! FOR MEMBERS ONLY

### Tian Fu Tea Room

1 dines FREE with 3 paying diners for Sparkling Imperial High Tea\* and Reunion Imperial High Tea^

Valid at all outlets (PARKROYAL on Beach Road, PARKROYAL on Kitchener Road, TOP of UOB Plaza).

Simply present NTUC Card to enjoy the offer. Terms and conditions apply.

\*Offer valid till 29 January 2014.

^Offer valid from 30 January to 14 February 2014.



### Orchard Hotel Singapore

#### Orchard Café

1 dines FREE with every 2 paying adults for Buffet.

Offer valid till 29 January 2014.

#### Hua Ting Restaurant

• 15% OFF A-la-carte menu.

Offer valid till 29 January 2014.

• 15% OFF Festive Goodies, Yu Sheng and A-la-carte Menu Takeaways. Offer valid till 14 February 2014. For enquiries or reservations, call **6734 7766**.



### Grand Park City Hall

#### Park Palace

10% OFF Lunar New Year Set Menus (10 persons).

Offer valid from 24 January to 14 February 2013 (Sun – Thur), excluding 30 January and 1 February.

\$180 net (6 persons) and \$300 net (10 persons) for Pen Cai.

Offer valid till 24 January 2014, for takeaways only. For enquiries or reservations, call **6432 5543**.



### Singapore Marriott Hotel

10% Off CNY Goodies and Cakes.

Offer valid from now till 29 January 2014.

#### Marriott Café

1 dines FREE with 2 paying adults for High Tea Buffet. Offer valid till 28 February 2014 (Mon – Fri).

For enquiries and reservations, call **6831 4605**.



### Ramada Singapore At Zhongshan Park

10% OFF CNY Eve Reunion Dinner (10 persons).

Offer valid on 30 January 2014, advance reservations of three days required.

#### Flavours At Zhongshan Park

\$96++ for Lunar New Year Communal Dinner (4 persons).

Offer valid from 2 February to 14 February 2014.

For enquiries and reservations, call **6801 6846**.



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##### PRINTER

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# The Big Wage Debate

Progressive versus Minimum: We zoom in on who's adopting what wage model where around the world and how it impacts low-wage workers.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Tharman Shanmugaratnam (right) in conversation with a participant at the event. Looking on is Minister for the Environment and Water Resources Vivian Balakrishnan (second from right).

By **Naseema Banu Maideen**

While announcing that the Government will make the Progressive Wage Model (PWM) a licensing condition on all companies providing cleaning and security services at the recent Best Sourcing Symposium, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Tharman Shanmugaratnam emphasised that the Singapore model is different from one which legislates a national minimum wage.

He said that while many countries have a national minimum wage, “there is more than meets the eye in how minimum wages impact the poor.”

*Check out the outcomes for both models in the table here as DPM Tharman explains how Singapore's progressive wages fare against minimum wages in other parts of the world.*

## DPM Tharman On How Singapore's Model Differs From Those In Other Countries

### Minimum Wages In Other Countries

#### EUROPE

- High minimum wages lead to high unemployment.
- The most severe impact falls on people with the lowest skills.
- Politicians are keen to take the credit for raising minimum wages, without accepting responsibility when those with low skills and experience are unable to find an employer at the minimum wage.
- Youth unemployment now exceeds 20% in much of Europe, including its more successful economies.



#### THE UNITED STATES

- Minimum wage is much lower than in Europe.
- US labour market is also more flexible.
- The US Congress is debating whether to raise the minimum wage, as a way to help the poor and reduce growing inequalities.
- But as economists have pointed out, a higher minimum wage will help some people while hurting others.
- The poor will typically not be the ones being helped.
- This is because the majority of the poor in the US are unemployed. Higher minimum wages will reduce their opportunities to find an employer, not help them.
- On the other hand, more than a third of those who actually earn the minimum wage are teenagers, many of whom come from better-off families.



### Progressive Wages In Singapore

- We want to raise incomes while helping everyone, including those with less skills, to stay on the job ladder.
- We are restructuring our economy to raise productivity and incomes for all.
- At the same time, we provide additional, targeted support for lower-income and low-skilled workers.
- The tripartite PWM that will be mandated in the cleaning and security industries, where cheap-sourcing discourages wage upliftment, is a new component for these sectors.
- However, direct Government support will remain at the core of our efforts to uplift our lower income workers.
- We are also providing strong and targeted Government help for lower income families, especially by giving their children additional support in education, and enabling even poorer families to own their homes.
- Our unemployment rate is amongst the lowest internationally.
- Lower wage workers at the bottom 20% of the income ladder have seen their incomes grow significantly in real terms in the last five years.
- The availability of jobs and the rise in incomes have also supported household incomes.
- Taking into account government transfers to households (net of taxes) such as Workfare and schemes such as the GST Voucher, household incomes in fact grew by 3.1% p.a. in real terms over the last five years.
- While we have made some progress in helping our low-wage workers, we are doing more.



# Fresh Start

A total of 26 companies with about 800 job vacancies offered a fresh start for those recently retrenched at a job fair arranged by UWEEI and NTUC's e2i.

By Nicholas Lee

**A**round 500 job seekers registered with NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) for day one of a job fair targeted at those who were looking for employment in the manufacturing industry. Part of a two day community job fair held at NTUC's e2i premises on 15 and 16 January 2014, day two of the job fair was for those looking for jobs in the services sector.

A total of 26 recruiting companies were present, bringing with them 800 job vacancies. United Test and Assembly Centre (UTAC) Engineering Section Manager Arnel Bernardo shared that his company agreed to participate in the job fair because it believes in the Government's call to provide equal opportunities for all.

"The job seekers here are very enthusiastic and I can see a very positive response from them," said Mr Arnel.

"Some of the candidates whom I interviewed have various skills from different backgrounds and they are willing to explore and learn," he added.

Job seekers had the opportunity to go through a job profiling session with representatives of the recruiting companies.

Nearly 140 former employees of HGST Singapore who were part of a retrenchment exercise in December last year also turned up at the job fair to seek out new opportunities. According to the United Workers of Electronics & Electrical Industries (UWEEI), the company has settled

**"I am happy that the union has helped us to go for the course (employability camp) and job fair, this makes our job search easier."**

*– Madam M. Mathayi, former employee of HGST Singapore*

all retrenchment benefits with the employees. Besides encouraging the affected employees to attend an employability camp and the job fair, the union has also been helping to follow-up on the workers job search requests.

Madam M. Mathayi, one of the HGST employees who was retrenched, said that she felt her chances were quite good after speaking with one company representative.

She shared: "I am happy that the union has helped us to go for the course (employability camp) and job fair, this makes our job search easier."

NTUC's e2i Chief Executive Officer Gilbert Tan revealed that platforms such as the job fairs allow them to bring together "companies and jobseekers including, those who were displaced due to companies' restructuring."

"NTUC's e2i is committed to place local workers into better jobs and to close the gap between job seekers and available vacancies," he added.



## QUICK LOOK

NTUC's e2i conducts regular job fairs at its premises and around the island to aid local Singaporeans get jobs. If you are interested and would like to find out when the next job fair is, do visit e2i's at <http://e2i.com.sg> and look under the events section.

# The Search For A Perfect Fit

It is looking to be a bright start for job seekers as NTUC's e2i continues to collaborate with companies to help Singaporeans join the workforce. We check out the various job fairs around town.

By **Joshua Joseph** and **Florina Oo**

## FOR BACK-TO-WORK LOCALS AND MATURE WORKERS

Some 400 participants showed up at the WorkPro Job Fair held at Cheng San Community Club in Ang Mo Kio on 9 January 2014, targeted at back-to-work locals and mature workers. Participating companies mainly included those from the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry.

At the fair, Amy Poh was looking to land a full-time job. She had previously left her full-time job as a bank clerk five years ago to attend to the needs of her child who was starting school in Primary One.

"Now that my child is older, it's time for me to come back to work... I want to look for jobs on a bigger scale like this one to see what the interviewing process and procedure are like since I've lost touch on them," she shared.

Over at NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute), a job fair for 7-Eleven was held on 10 January to attract retirees and housewives to return to the workforce with a flexible work arrangement scheme. One of those who turned up was 63-year-old Ong Soon Kim. Mr Ong is determined to remain actively employed, even though he is now retired.

Also on the lookout for flexible work arrangements was 54-year-old Jacqueline Ong, who was retrenched in April last year. Ms Ong is keen to continue working and has taken up lessons to familiarise herself with Microsoft programmes. At the job fair, she took up the offer to try out one of the administrative positions.



## FOR FRESH SCHOOL-LEAVERS AND MID-CAREER SWITCHERS

A booster session can help shake off the unnecessary anxiety before a job interview, and this was what some 150 job seekers received when they attended the Marine Industry Job Fair on 13 January, held on NTUC's e2i premises.

Before meeting prospective employers, the job seekers sat down to listen to a presentation about the dos and don'ts during a job interview.

Among the job seekers was 30-year-old Jagan Krishnam, who is seeking a change of environment and provide better support for his mother. Having worked in the electronics industry for the past 23 years,



43-year-old Ahmad Abdul Rahim was also keen on a change.

But it wasn't all about a mid-career switch. Twenty-one-year-old Faizal Mohamed had spent time online to search for openings and hopes to land a job with a leading offshore rig company at the job fair.



## What's Next

Looking for a job? Here are a few upcoming job fairs organised by NTUC's e2i.

- **PME Career Fair** on 23 January @ e2i, Level 1, Hall 1
- **Community Job Fair** on 18 & 19 February @ Kallang Community Centre

Visit <http://e2i.com.sg> for more information.

# What's In Your Pay Packet?

**Very soon workers will know the exact breakdown of their salary with itemised payslips.**

**T**he Labour Movement has welcomed the Tripartite Guidelines on Issuance of Itemised Payslips as it will mean greater transparency for workers, said NTUC Assistant Secretary-General Cham Hui Fong.

“Providing workers with itemised payslips will go some way to help them better understand their salary components as well as provide a means of proper documentation.

“On the part of workers, we encourage them to keep their payslips properly



and clarify with their employers or HR personnel if they do not understand any of the components listed in their payslips,” she said.

NTUC and the Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) plans to actively reach out to members to encourage and assist them in adopting the guidelines, with the Ministry of Manpower intending to make payslip issuance a legal requirement in the next two years.

Developed by NTUC and tripartite partners the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) and SNEF, the guidelines were released on 13 January this year to assist employers with issuing the payslips, in particular Small and Medium Enterprises.

The guidelines set out how companies can put in place the system of administering payslips, and provide payslip templates they

can use and customise. MOM is also working with the InfoComm Development Authority of Singapore and SPRING Singapore to provide tools such as simple payslip booklets, downloadable templates, and funding support for companies to develop customised solutions by April 2014.



## Where To Get Help

For queries or assistance in implementing the guidelines, please contact your respective SNEF IR consultant or email to [ir@snef.org.sg](mailto:ir@snef.org.sg). You can also contact the **duty consultant hotline at 6327 9297**.

# Fare Concessions Unveiled

**Two new schemes will be in place to help lower-income families and persons with disabilities.**



**T**he Public Transport Council has announced an overall public transport fare adjustment of 3.2 per cent for 2013, which will take effect from 6 April 2014.

The Government will draw down \$7.5 million from the Public Transport Fund, which was set up in 2007 to provide help to lower-income households on public transport costs. This will go towards funding 250,000 public transport vouchers (PTVs), an increase from previous distributions of PTVs (100,000 to 200,000).

In addition, the PTVs can be distributed throughout the year while they last. Each voucher is worth \$30 and can be used to purchase or top up fare cards or to buy monthly fare concession passes.

National Transport Workers Union

(NTWU) General Secretary Fang Chin Poh said: “Public transport workers provide an essential service, with many waking up in the wee hours of the morning so that they can ferry commuters to their destinations, and there are also many who work past midnight to serve the last buses and trains.

“We hope that part of the fare adjustments will benefit workers in the public transport industry. We are also heartened that the low-wage workers will be able to benefit from the new concession schemes.”

The application period for the PTVs will start from 3 March 2014. The People's Association will work together with the Citizens' Consultative Committees (CCC) to help distribute the vouchers in early April.

*Interested parties can make enquiries or applications at their local community centres and clubs.*

## New Schemes

The Government will introduce and fund two new concession schemes for low-wage workers (LWWs) and persons with disabilities (PWDs) to help fares remain affordable for these two groups, at an expected cost of \$50 million a year. The new concession schemes will start on 6 July 2014. About 400,000 LWWs and 50,000 PWDs are expected to benefit from the two new concession schemes in the first year.

### THE NEW WORKFARE TRANSPORT CONCESSION SCHEME

LWWs under the Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) scheme will enjoy 15 per cent discount off adult fares. This scheme is intended to help LWWs who depend on public transport for work, and want to pursue better jobs and training opportunities further away from their homes.

### THE NEW PWD FARE CONCESSION SCHEME

PWDs will enjoy 25 per cent discount off adult fares and will not have to pay additional fares for distances beyond 7.2km. On top of this, PWDs can opt to buy a Monthly Concession Pass with unlimited bus and train rides at \$60 per month.

# BATU Leaders Set The Way Forward

The Labour Movement's 3-Flow model has had veteran leaders step up to the spirit of leadership renewal actively and readily.

By **Naseema Banu Maideen**

**A** celebration of servant leadership that made way for new leaders – that was how Building Construction and Timber Industries' Employees' Union (BATU) ushered in the year on 5 January.

The union came together with its management partners to thank eight 'Flow-On' leaders that evening at the Orchid Country Club.

The eight leaders who have all reached the age of 62 years have decided to step aside and assume mentorship roles in the union.

Having served their branches with care and precision, Mr Pua Hock Seng, Mr Phua Kwang Meng, Kanapathy Gannasagaran, Mr Daniel Tan Yong Soon, Mr Tan Meng Seng, Mr Lee Hong Heng, Mr Kooi Guan Chew and Mr Ramachandran s/o Raja Gopal have groomed and identified the next generation of leaders.

Two of the veterans share on what has kept them closely-knit with union work over the years.

## WORKING ON THAT EXTRA YEAR

Speaking up for workers nearing the retirement age is one of the most passionate issues that Mr Phua Kwang Meng, a Property Agent with Mapletree Group is known for. He constantly provides constructive feedback and plays a key role in drafting out the re-employment policies.

He approaches retiring staff, speaks to them on their concerns and also works with his organisation's Human Resources (HR) to ensure a smooth re-employment contract.

Recently, he even persuaded the management into extending an employee's re-employment contract for another year after he turned 65 years old.

"This was the first such case for us, and I am very satisfied with the outcome as the employee was one who wanted to continue working," said Mr Phua.

Mr Phua has served the branch for 11 years and is now serving as an Advisor.



BATU's flow-on and current leaders in celebration: (from left) Mr Pua Hock Sing, Mr Zainal Sapari, Mr Kanapathy Gaanasagaran, Mr Nasordin Mohamed Hashim, Mr Kooi Guan Chew, Mr Daniel Tan Yong Soon, Mr Tan Meng Seng, Mr Lee Hong Heng, Mr Phua Kwang Meng and Mr Richard Teo Kang Gan. (Not in picture: Mr Ramachandran s/o Raja Gopal).

## CARING FOR EVERY MEMBER

His mission is to ensure that no member is left out. And Mr Kanapathy Gaanasagaran lives up to this in his daily union work.

He started as a Branch Official in Sembcorp Environment in 2006. In the early years when BATU started actively reaching out to workers in the cleaning sectors, he played a key role in enhancing the membership pool.

When Ramky Group took over the Services Division of Sembcorp Environment Private Limited in Singapore in 2009, Mr Gaanasagaran continued his service in Ramky Cleantech Services Private Limited.

During the transition, members were entitled to an ex-gratia payment negotiated by the union. He handled worried members' queries and assured them. He worked together with the Industrial Relations Officer to ensure members received their payment on time and that they were also settled in their new operations.

"When members come to me with their grievances and share their concerns on their jobs with me, I tell myself that I must always do my best to resolve them. To me, that is my duty," he shared.

## BATU's Report Card For 2013

The union shared its report card for the past year with guests, which consisted of BATU Council of Advisors, trustees, and management partners. Among the guests were the representatives from the 19 companies which were newly organised by the union in 2013.

Shared BATU President Nasordin Mohamed Hashim: "Over the past year, BATU has grown with about 4000 new members joining us... BATU has also played an important role in helping workers in the cleaning and waste management industry by implementing Progressive Wage. As a result, more than 4,000 cleaners are now receiving a basic salary of at least \$1,000."

He also said that the union is now working with various key stakeholders to implement the Progressive Wage Model in the carpark attendant, pest control and landscape industries to enable workers in these sectors to improve their skills, wages, productivity and careers.

# The Power-Packed Woman

Women play complex roles in their lives as family supporters, peace makers and a lot more. This column brings you stories on some of these unique personalities – female unionists – who add vibrance to the Labour Movement.

By **Naseema Banu Maideen**

**T**he 55-year old Union of Power and Gas Employees (UPAGE) Deputy General Secretary Susheela A. Singaram can seem like a tough leader when she voices out for members.

Along with this side, there is also a subtle approach in her – the approach that shows up when she deals with women and their issues at work.

Having been deeply entrenched with union works for over three decades now, Madam Susheela has risen up to a top leadership rank amidst serving in a male-dominated industry.

While she looks into the activities of UPAGE and her branch City Gas Private Limited, the grandmother of two has also found time to dedicate to championing work-life initiatives. She works closely with NTUC Women's Development Secretariat (WDS) on these efforts. In fact, she is the Chairperson of WDS Work-Life Initiatives Committee.

"My involvement with NTUC's Women's Committee's activities dates back to the time I started with union work. So, I am well aware of the needs and worries of working women. And



Madam Susheela (in garland) busy with her family at an event at the temple as she dedicates time for them amidst her union and work responsibilities.

from working with many people on the ground, I also know that there is a large volume of women out there who can come back and contribute to the workforce. All they need is some help and guidance," she said.

Before taking on to lead the Work-Life Initiatives Committee in WDS, Madam Susheela has also been working with

other leaders on WDS' WeCare For U project, which reaches out to assist single mums in building greater resilience and independence through various intervention programmes.

"It was through this channel that we (WDS) had a clearer understanding of the needs of these working women. We were already working with several partners to bring family-friendly work practices such as Flexible-Work Arrangements (FWAs) for them. Therefore, these efforts are now expanded on the Work-Life Initiatives Committee," Madam Susheela added.

From job-sharing arrangements, part-time work and other forms of

FWAs, Madam Susheela finds satisfaction in exploring job options that suit their family needs. With WDS, she works together with many employers to tap on available Government funding and technological advancements to help these women.

She added: "There is so much more to be explored. If we keep up with working together, we can achieve more and support more women at the workplaces."

And it's not all just union and work for this active leader. Madam Susheela also tries her very best to attend family events to show her support to them as well.

After all, she is an advocate of work-life initiatives.



Networking with other female unionists (Madam Susheela, second from right).



Members discussing their retirement plans as part of a group activity.

## Ready For Retirement?

The National Taxi Association gives its above 65-year-old taxi driver members a headstart with a retirement planning talk.

By **Nicholas Lee**

**W**hat do you do with the prospect of finally entering into your retirement days? If you are like 74-year-old Lim Chee Pheng, you go to a useful talk to find out what's in store and the best way to live out that post-work life phase.

A taxi driver for over 30 years, Mr Lim (Hear his full story on the right: **The Next Phase**) was one of the 28 taxi drivers and members of the National Taxi Association (NTA) above the age of 65 who took time out to attend the retirement planning talk held at Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH) on 10 January 2013.

NTA General Secretary Albert Ong shared that with more than 60 per cent of NTA members aged 60 years old and above, it had decided to work with TTSH to organise the talk. This was to help drivers who were going to retire, with many who would find it hard to adjust to life without driving.

"Many of the drivers continue driving till they are 75 years old for the sake of the community and getting together with their friends," said Mr Ong.

Besides the talk, NTA has also collaborated with the Health Promotion

Board and other medical groups to offer low-cost basic medical and dental check-up for its members reaching retirement.

According to Principal Occupational Therapist Dr Chan Mei Leng, who led the talk, her research findings show that retired taxi drivers often have problems adjusting to the change in their lives and some end up feeling "unwanted".

While there are no concrete plans for more of such talks moving forward, she is open to explore the possibility with interested stakeholders. She also noted that this could be "a potentially new area of development of engagement with organisation HR departments and staff unions."

Tips for retirement? Members attending the talk picked up useful information and advice on the benefits of planning for retirement, such as creating a daily schedule to keep them occupied and fully engaged with their surroundings.

The taxi drivers also had the opportunity to break into smaller groups to discuss how to take full advantage of their retirement years and lead meaningful lives.

## The Next Phase

"I am going to live my life actively by working in some simple jobs," says Mr Lim on wanting to enjoy his retirement time.

Having plied Singapore roads for the last 30 years, taxi driver Mr Lim Chee Pheng is now nearing the mandatory retirement age in his profession when he turns 75 in August this year.

Before becoming a taxi driver, Mr Lim worked in various occupations that ranged from being a carpenter to a cement truck driver. After having chalked up these work experiences, he ultimately decided to stay on as a taxi driver because he found the profession to be the least tough compared to the rest he had done.



Mr Lim Chee Pheng (right)

"You can choose when you want to go for lunch and when you would want to start and stop your shift," said Mr Lim, who has been driving seven days a week, except for days he happened to fall ill.

Asked if he has plans for his impending retirement, Mr Lim reveals that although there's nothing concrete yet, but when the time comes, he hopes to be able to do some simple work.

"The Government has been encouraging us elderly citizens to remain active in retirement, so I am going to live my life actively by working in some simple jobs.

"I have some friends who have retired and are now doing some simple jobs which they enjoy, so I want to be like that when I retire," added Mr Lim.

**The  
Good Life  
Starts Here**

Senior workers and retirees aged 55 years old and above can continue to live happy, healthy, productive and purposeful lives with the Labour Movement's U Live community, which boasts various exciting activities and over 20 interest groups.

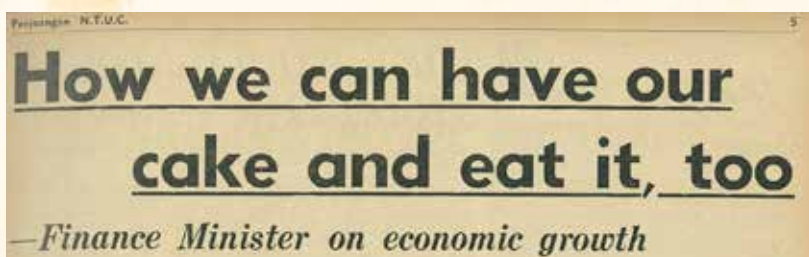
Log on to [www.ulive.com.sg](http://www.ulive.com.sg) to sign up as a member today!

# This Week In History



**NTUC This Week turns 50 this year. It was first published in November 1964 as a monthly titled *Perjuangan NTUC*. *Perjuangan* means struggle in Malay, and the title captured the spirit of the times. The publication's first Editor was then NTUC Secretary-General Devan Nair. From our 3 January 2014 issue onwards, *NTUC This Week* will pull out excerpts of main stories from past issues, starting with the very first until the present. This week, we look at the January 1965 issue.**

By **Marcus Lin**



The tripartite State Economic Consultative Council, a brainchild of Singapore's then Finance Minister Dr Goh Keng Swee, held its first meeting on 15 January 1965.

In his speech, Dr Goh gave the recipe for industrial expansion: "Among the favourable conditions for rapid industrial growth, the most vital element in our case is harmonious labour-management relationships.

Unless this exists and is continuously maintained, there will not be the climate of confidence that is so vital for industrial expansion.

"Fortunately for us in Singapore, this is widely understood among all the partners concerned in our joint endeavour to promote rapid industrialisation - the Government, the labour movement and private enterprise.

"Not so long ago, a section

of the labour movement was controlled by anti-national, pro-communist elements. They also understand this principle quite clearly and, of course, they made it their objective to sour up industrial relations because they want to frustrate industrial development which, by generating prosperity and reducing unemployment, will undermine their political position."

He concluded by stressing that "this Council is the medium whereby Government, the trade unions and business can discuss problems of common interest. I hope all concerned will make valuable contributions to these discussions and I am certain we can all profit from them."

NTUC President Ho See Beng also spoke at the first meeting of the State Economic Consultative Council: "A democratic Government interested in the welfare of the people has come forward with the suggestion to establish this tripartite body in order to see that there are no offsets in the economy as a result of any unilateral action on the part of either the employers or the unions.

"Further, for progressive industrialisation and increase in productivity, a consultative council at the highest level would necessarily act as a catalytic agent. We would like to make it quite explicit at this juncture that we refuse to be made a rubber stamp endorsing each and every proposal of either the Government or the employer.

"We have to safeguard the interests of the workers and as such cannot afford to abdicate our responsibility. Nevertheless, we are determined to explore all avenues of co-operation so that eventually we can build up a healthy employer-employee relationship, moving towards progressive industrialisation.

"Further, without increasing productivity, labour's share of the national product is unlikely to increase. Mere re-distribution of existing national product very seldom provides a long-term solution. There is an immediate necessity for labour, employer and the State to co-operate in order to increase productivity."

## The Editor Speaks

BY **C. V. DEVAN NAIR, SECRETARY GENERAL, N.T.U.C.**

### 1. From the Communist Left to the Communalist Right

In his column, Mr Devan Nair wrote: "The democratic trade union movement in Singapore, spearheaded by the NTUC, has emerged triumphant after three years of bitter struggle against pro-communist elements.

"Our communist opponents were hard and difficult people to fight and we can claim with pride that nowhere else in Asia, indeed nowhere else in the world, has a non-communist group like ours been able to fight back against such redoubtable opponents as the communists, who had dominated the trade union movement in the past, and to establish a clear ascendancy over them.

"Practically everywhere else, the non-communists have invariably been swallowed up by the communists. Today we find ourselves in a situation in which we have to shift our attention from the communist danger to the menace posed by the communalists. The communists are still there, but we have taken their measure and considerably minimised their influence in the labour movement.

"It is just this time which has been chosen by communal-minded politicians to try their hand in Singapore's labour movement. There might be an inclination in our ranks towards complacency in

the face of communalist attempts on the trade union movement. It might be argued that after trouncing such redoubtable foes as the communists, the antics of communal-minded politicians in the field of labour will prove to be mere chicken-feed for the NTUC.

"This is quite true. The communalist leaders from across the Causeway have distinctly lower IQs than the communists possess. But we would be wrong to under-estimate the mischief they can do in Singapore if we do not take the trouble to expose them."

# What's Happening, Where

## 1 U Sports Run @ Velocity

**Date:** Every first Friday of the month  
(upcoming session is 7 February 2014)  
**Time:** 7.30pm (Please come at 7pm for registration)  
**Venue:** Velocity @ Novena Square, Outdoor Court  
238 Thomson Road, Singapore 307683  
**Running Distance:** 5km to 10km each session

Looking for running buddies? Join U Sports every first Friday of the month for a leisurely evening run in the Novena vicinity. Refreshments will be provided.

For more information, contact [alvin\\_tham@ntucclub.com.sg](mailto:alvin_tham@ntucclub.com.sg) or [looi.yuan.hui@ntucclub.com.sg](mailto:looi.yuan.hui@ntucclub.com.sg).



## 2 Chasing Hearts

**Date:** 8 February 2014, Saturday  
**Time:** 3pm  
**Venue:** Downtown East  
**Fees:** \$10 (NTUC/nEbO Plus! members) / \$15 (Public)

A treasure hunt for hearts! Grab your partner and comb Downtown East to find enough little coloured hearts hidden in nooks and crannies to fill an entire jar in a stipulated time. The couple with the most number of hearts will win a 3D/2N stay at Costa Sands (Downtown East) for Valentine's Day!

Registration is via [www.ticketbooth.com.sg](http://www.ticketbooth.com.sg) and closes 26 January 2014. For enquiries, call **6296 2929**.



## 3 Job Opportunities Briefing For Maritime Officers

**Date:** 12 February 2014, Wednesday  
**Time:** 10am or 2pm  
**Venue:** e2i, Level 1, Hall 1  
80, Jurong East Street 21, Singapore 609607

Ever wanted to grow up and be a Captain of the seas, sailing around the world? Here's your chance – check out the various opportunities available at this maritime officers' training programmes and career prospects briefing. Positions available include Captain and Third Officer.

To register, log on to <http://e2i.com.sg/> and look under 'Upcoming Events'.

## 4 Team U Sports - Dragonboat Recruitment

**Date:** 15 February 2014, Saturday  
**Time:** 2.30pm – 6.30pm  
**Venue:** Kallang Watersports Centre  
**Fees:** \$3 (NTUC/nEbO members) / \$5 (Non-Members)

Calling all dragonboating enthusiasts, do think you have what it takes to be a 'Dragon' of Team U Sports? Power up and give it your best shot

in this 1-day recruitment event. For competitive rowers, here's your chance to fire up the passion for this one-of-a-kind sport while leisure rowers can take a dip into a new experience on the water.

To register, log on to [www.usports.com.sg](http://www.usports.com.sg) and look under 'Events'.

## 5 THE QUEST 2014 – Battleground

**Dates:** 15 March 2014, Saturday  
**Time:** 8.30am – 5pm  
**Venue:** ITE College Central  
**Fees:** \$10 (nEbO members) / \$20 (Public) Now till 31 January 2014  
\$20 (nEbO members) / \$30 (Public) 1 to 22 February 2014

Summon your inner Katniss Everdeen from *The Hunger Games* as you compete in a team of four in a huge archery battle to hit targets and tag enemies out. The last team standing in the arena will walk away with more than \$20,000 worth of prizes. This sixth installment of nEbO's signature annual event combines the thrill and intensity of dodgeball and paintball with bows and foam-tipped arrows as the weapons of choice.

Register by 22 February 2014 at nEbO mation @ Elhub, Downtown East, nEbO Hub @ AMK Hub or online at [www.nEbO.sg/thequest2014](http://www.nEbO.sg/thequest2014).

For enquiries, log on to [www.nEbO.sg](http://www.nEbO.sg) or email [thequest@nEbO.com.sg](mailto:thequest@nEbO.com.sg).

## 6 Keepfit! 2014 Lights Edition

**Date:** 1 March 2014, Saturday  
**Time:** 6pm - 10pm  
**Venue:** F1 Village

Workouts will never be the same with this new edition of KeepFit!. Light up your evening with U Sports very first high intensity mass workout event under the stars. Sweat it out with your family and friends for a two-hour Endurance Challenge of Zumba and Sh'Bam under new lighting effects and luminous colours!

For registration fees and other details, log on to [www.usports.com.sg/events/keepfit-2014/](http://www.usports.com.sg/events/keepfit-2014/). Register before 3 February to enjoy early bird rates. For enquiries, email [looi.yuan.hui@ntucclub.com.sg](mailto:looi.yuan.hui@ntucclub.com.sg).



# 薪金制之评论



**到底施行哪一种薪金制对低薪工友有好处？我国副总理尚达曼在最近举行的优包座谈会上了作了比较说明：**



副总理兼财政部长尚达曼（右）在活动中与工友交谈。面向镜头的是环境与水源部长维文（右二）。

## 其他国家施行最低薪金制的情况

- ### 欧洲
- 高额最低薪金导致高失业率。
  - 深重影响低技能工友。
  - 政治家热衷于以提高最低薪金来邀功，他们不管最低薪金制造成低技能或经验不足者难找工作的问题。
  - 欧洲大部分地区，包括当中取得成功的经济体，其年轻人的失业率超过20%。

### 美国

- 最低薪金额比欧洲低得多。
- 美国的劳工市场远比欧洲灵活。
- 美国国会正在辩论是否要通过提高最低薪金协助贫困人士和降低收入增长不均。
- 但诚如经济学家所指出，提高最低薪金能帮助一些人，却伤害了另一批人。
- 贫困人士通常没能得到真正的帮助。
- 这是因为美国的大部分贫困人士是失业者。提高最低薪金往往降低了他们求得一职的机会，对他们没有帮助。
- 换句话说，最低薪金的得益者，超过三成实际上是青少年，他们很多是富裕家庭的子女。

## 我国施行渐进式薪金制的情况

- 帮助每一个人提高收入，包括技能较低的工友，好让他们留在工作阶梯之上。
- 我们通过经济重组提高生产力，以及全民的收入。
- 与此同时，我们向低薪工友和低技能工友提供额外的和有针对性的支持。
- 劳资政即将在廉包盛行、不鼓励加薪的清洁业和保安业强制推行渐进式薪金制，可谓在这些行业注入新的气象。
- 政府的直接援助重心仍放在提升低薪工友。
- 政府也给予低薪家庭大量的，以及针对性的援助，尤其是给予他们的子女额外的教育援助，甚至是帮助贫困家庭购买房子。
- 我国的失业率属于全球最低。
- 收入阶梯位于最低20%的低薪工友过去5年来的实质收入取得显著的增长。
- 求职机会和收入增加也提高了家庭的总收入。
- 考虑到政府付给我国家庭的就业入息辅助金和消费税券等免税援助，低薪家庭过去5年来的实质收入增长达到3.1%。
- 我们在协助低薪工友虽然取得一些进展，接下来将再接再厉，多做工作。

## 我的薪水单记录些什么？

全国职总欢迎劳资政于1月13日公布的薪水单明细化指导原则。

指导原则内容包括企业如何系统管理薪水单，以及提供薪水单范本，供中小企业者直接使用或定制使用。

为了方便中小企业者尽快跟上需求，人力部正与资讯通信发展局和标准与创新局合作，订在2014年4月份之前，完成简易说明小册和可供下载的薪水单范本，协助企业在当局于两年之后立法实施薪水单明细化之前进行调整。那些须要定制薪水单的公司，当局也将提供资金支持。

职总助理秘书长詹惠凤表示：“实施薪水单明细化在某种程度上可以帮助工友明了薪金结构和其中

的组成部分，同时也可作为一种正规的文件。”她鼓励工友们将来好好保存薪水单；对于薪水单上所列出的各个项目有什么不了解的地方，应向雇主或人事部职员询问。

薪水单明细化指导原则是由全国职总、人力部及全国雇主联合会共同制定。

### 如何实施？

雇主们若有疑问，请联系各自的全国雇主联合会工业关系顾问，或拨打热线：6327-9297及致电函查询：ir@snef.org.sg

## 协助国人寻找工作

职总就业与职能培训中心多年来不断和公司企业合作，帮助国人找工作。

例如2014年1月15-16日，该中心一连两天组织26家招聘公司展出800份工作，吸引了500名求职者前来参观。第一天展出的是制造业的工作，第二天展出的工作与服务业相关。

就业与职能培训中心总裁陈财喜表示，主办这种职业展的好处是能够撮合公司和求职者，让本地工友找到较好工作，既满足了公司也造福了工友。

United Test and Assembly Centre (UTAC) 工程部经理Arnel Bernardo透露，该公司是应政府的呼吁，前来提供平等的求职机会。他留意到：“这里的求职者非常热情，反应也很热烈。来面试的工友背景各异，技能不同，但他们都愿意多听多了解。”

## 卸任领袖转而担任导师

建筑与木材业工友联合会的8名资深领袖于1月5日在胡姬乡村俱乐部举行的仪式上宣告卸任。

这批领袖的年龄都达到62岁，他们遵循工运的“三接”计划（接受-接棒-接连），卸任后将转而在工会里扮演导师的角色。这一程序称为“接连”。

工运施行的“三接”计划，旨在确保领导层更新顺畅，避免出现青黄不接的情况。建筑与木材业雇联也在当晚公布过去一年来的工作成绩。



接连领袖（穿白色和奶油色衬衫）接下来将担任导师，指导年轻领袖处理工会事务。

### 接下来的职业展

- 专业、经理和执行人员职业展：1月23日在就业与职能培训中心一层的第一会场举行。
- 社区职业展：2月18-19日于加冷民众俱乐部举行。



您也可以上网查询就业与职能培训中心定期在全岛各处举行的职业展：<http://e2i.com.sg>

## 匡正错误，关怀外劳

**萨迪克(下图)在工作时手部意外受伤**，他生怕会被遣返，于是逃离雇主。他并不知道，一旦被发现失踪，雇主为他申请的工作准证和所作的住宿安排也会一并取消。

这位受聘于某建筑公司的44岁电缆工前往人力资源部报案，当局安排他到外劳中心去。

中心的工作人员会见萨迪克后便通知雇主，萨迪克目前与他们在一起。在此期间，外劳中心立即给萨迪克提供两天的食宿，同时等待雇主作出类似的安排。

萨迪克只是外劳中心自2009年成立以来处理过的个案之一。

外劳中心在住房、咨询和处理不公平雇佣行为等诸多方面向外劳伸出援手。他们还通过各类宣传活动、社区参与及公共教育，协助外劳融入我国社会。

近期，外劳中心工作团队知悉250名外劳陷入困境后，即刻向他们伸出援手，提供多达4945顿的饭菜。

其实，在去年11月，这群外劳得知所服务的承包商-Interprime Contractors Pte Ltd以债权人的身份向法院提出了自动清盘的申请，并于2013年12月20日生起效。对于这群劳工来说，这确实是一个可怕的情况，因为公司自去年9月开始便拖欠他们的薪水。

当外劳中心发现该公司不交人头税和拖欠薪水已经几个月，便迅速在2013年11月13日派出3名工作人员赶到公司处所，看看是否能向外劳提供人道援助。然而，工作人员抵步后公司拒绝让他们进入办事处和有关场地，情况顿时变得复杂起来。

然而，工作团队并没有放弃，坚持在门口等待。他们的苦心终于得到了回报，一群外劳的身影不久即出现在他们的视线内。工作团队抓紧机会上前表明身份，并告知中心如何能帮助他们。

外劳反映了他们的焦虑，而且表示不确定是否能讨回欠款。他们也急于知道公司是否会为他们安排其他工作。

外劳提如帕地显得焦急不安：“我们不知道该怎么办才好。三个月没有领薪水，很难出去走动，恰好屠妖节又快到了，我们没有钱寄回家。”

当得知外劳仍然允许留在公司的辅助宿舍后，外劳中心团队才放下心，而且在返回之前与外劳互换联系资料。

随后，外劳中心团队便紧密跟进人力部与公司董事经理谈判如何支付拖欠薪水的事宜，同时转告外劳相关的安排：另找工作或遣返。

2013年11月20日，外劳中心团队允许进入公司场地进行调查。他们发现，公司接头的饮食公司因收不到餐费，已经停止给外劳供应食物一天了。中心团队见状马上出外买回100包印度黄姜饭让外劳果腹，同时电话通知己方的饮食公司给外劳送食。

如今，提如帕地和他的同事们也在别处找到了新工作。至于那些工作无着落的外劳，公司则为他们安排住宿，食物由外劳中心提供，直到他们遣返为止。

走出危机，提如帕地以简易英语表达心中的感激之情：“能领回薪水，外劳中心也给我们提供食物，实在是太高兴了！”

帮助外劳解除困境是我们的使命，而外劳配合实现外劳中心的4大目标也很重要。我们的4大目标是公平、援助、融合、代表性。我们同情外劳的处境，并尽所能帮助他们得到雇主公正的对待，以及关心他们的整体福利和福祉。

— 外劳中心执行董事(营运)吴多汉

