

COMRADE OF LABOUR

Samuel Lim Soon Heng

Executive Committee Member
National Transport Workers' Union

Nominated by the National Transport Workers' Union

Samuel Lim Soon Heng was a bus captain (BC) with SMRT from 2005 to 2020 where he served as a union leader till he was transferred to Tower Transit.

During his 15-year tenure as a union leader at SMRT, he was instrumental in shaping several key policies like the transition of BCs from a six-day work week to five-day work week.

Around that same period, Brother Samuel played a key role in the cessation of the encashment of medical leave policy for medical leave unique to BC with a lump sum payment as buyout. In this whole process, Brother Samuel and his team ensured that BC welfare and interests were not undermined.

He was also instrumental in getting management and workers to support the implementation of the Progressive Wage Model (PWM) as early as 2013. With the introduction of the PWM, BC's salaries improved from \$1,375 in 2012 to \$1,675 in 2013, and progressively grew over the years to today's \$2,150.

Bus Contracting Model was initiated in 2016. Since then, Brother Samuel has advocated strongly for the protection of BCs by ensuring that workers' compensation were no worse off, jobs were protected and workers have right of refusal to join new operator.

In 2020, SMRT lost one of their bus packages to Tower Transit and Brother Samuel was one of the affected employees along with 1,000 others.

Brother Samuel led his team of union leaders to start negotiations with Tower Transit to ensure that workers transitioned smoothly. For over two years till 2022, Brother Samuel worked tirelessly to ensure that every affected workers' concerns on the transitions are timely addressed and that every workers could adapt to the new employer.

Indeed, due to all these difficult and engaging work with workers and management on the ground, more than 93 per cent of the affected employees chose to cross over ensuring that bus services are not affected.

COVID-19 pandemic during this period further compounded the transition challenges. Brother Samuel has to work closely with Tower Transit to ensure that all Malaysian workers were given proper accommodations, meals/transport and all their challenges faced.

Despite all these, Brother Samuel persevered and was fully acknowledged by Tower Transit management as an instrumental union leader and widely respected by fellow colleagues at Tower Transit.

Brother Samuel worked closely with SMRT and Tower Transit management to help encourage BC to attend training related to operating electric buses and future autonomous buses as Safety Operators.

At the same time, Brother Samuel strongly encourage and set himself as a role model to all BC to continuously upgrade and learn digital skills as SMRT and Tower Transit embarked on digitalising their operations.

All BCs must learn to use their phone to access company apps on workplace related matters such as applying for annual leave, checking work rosters, e-pay slips and overtime computation verifications.