

## Tripartism Drives Cheaper Better Faster

**T**here's absolutely no two ways about it. From now on, Singapore's economy must be productivity-driven and it is very obvious to the Labour Movement that the effort has to come from all sectors of the economy, all enterprises and all workers.

The Labour Movement's Cheaper Better Faster drive is geared towards that and NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say has given an assurance: "We want to work with whoever wants to focus on productivity to be cheaper, focus on upgrading capabilities to be better, focus on multi-skills, multi-capabilities to be more adaptable and faster.

"Anybody who wants to run towards that productivity, capability and adaptability, our commitment is that we will run with you. You run at 10 km an hour, we run with you at 10 km an hour. You run at 100 km an hour, we run with you at 100 km an hour. But if you decide not to run, it will be a big problem for you and for us," and that "the economic agencies and the companies have to take

the lead but the Labour Movement will run with you as fast and as far as you want."

SG Lim told participants at the Tripartite Workshop on Cheaper Better Faster Economy on 8 January 2010 that "we have no choice because if we do not transform the Singapore economy into a productivity-driven one, we will not be able to sustain our growth." Appropriately, workshop participants deliberated on how to spread Cheaper Better Faster initiatives broadly among companies and workers, and how government agencies can leverage on the Labour

Movement to achieve Cheaper Better Faster.

Representatives from 14 government agencies, 14 unions, six industry/training partners and NTUC leaders heard from SG Lim that though last year turned out better than feared, it was still a negative year economy-wise. 2010 promises to be challenging and one should not read too much into upbeat forecasts of the Singapore economy growing by 5, 5.5, or 6 per cent, he said, as it's after all compared against the lows of 2009.

"From the Labour Movement point of view, we are not really just concerned in 2010 whether we are able to achieve 4, 5 or 6 per cent growth. What we are more concerned about is, on a structural basis, how are we able to continue to grow the Singapore economy bearing in mind that the better competitors are getting cheaper and the cheaper competitors are getting better.



**“If you look at the track record of the Labour Movement the last 10 to 20 years, it speaks for itself. We are a very serious people. When we say we want to do something, we will do it.”**

Lim Swee Say, NTUC Secretary-General

"What we are concerned about is are we able to grow the Singapore economy at 4, 5, 6 per cent not just for the next one year but the next 10 years? At the same time, we are also concerned about whether we will be able to regain our lost ground in the drop in the employment rate and to further increase it."

To do so, he said "we believe that there is only one way to achieve it and that is having the tripartite partners to continue to work together. So, government obviously has a role to play, employers obviously have a role to play but never forget that the Labour Movement also has an important role to play."

Emphasising that Cheaper Better Faster is easier said than done, he added: "On the ground, improving productivity, competitiveness and upgrading skills is a very painful process. There is no short cut. A ministry can tomorrow come up with a policy statement to promote productivity, innovation and competitiveness.

"Yes, it is important to have good policies and financial schemes in place. But policies and financial incentives on paper do not translate into real productivity and transformation on the ground unless we work industry by industry, sector by sector, company by company, worker by worker. That is the biggest value-add of the Labour Movement."

Members  
Drive  
Sparks  
Electric  
Dreams



By  
Marcus Lin

See **Page 2**

**Page  
11**