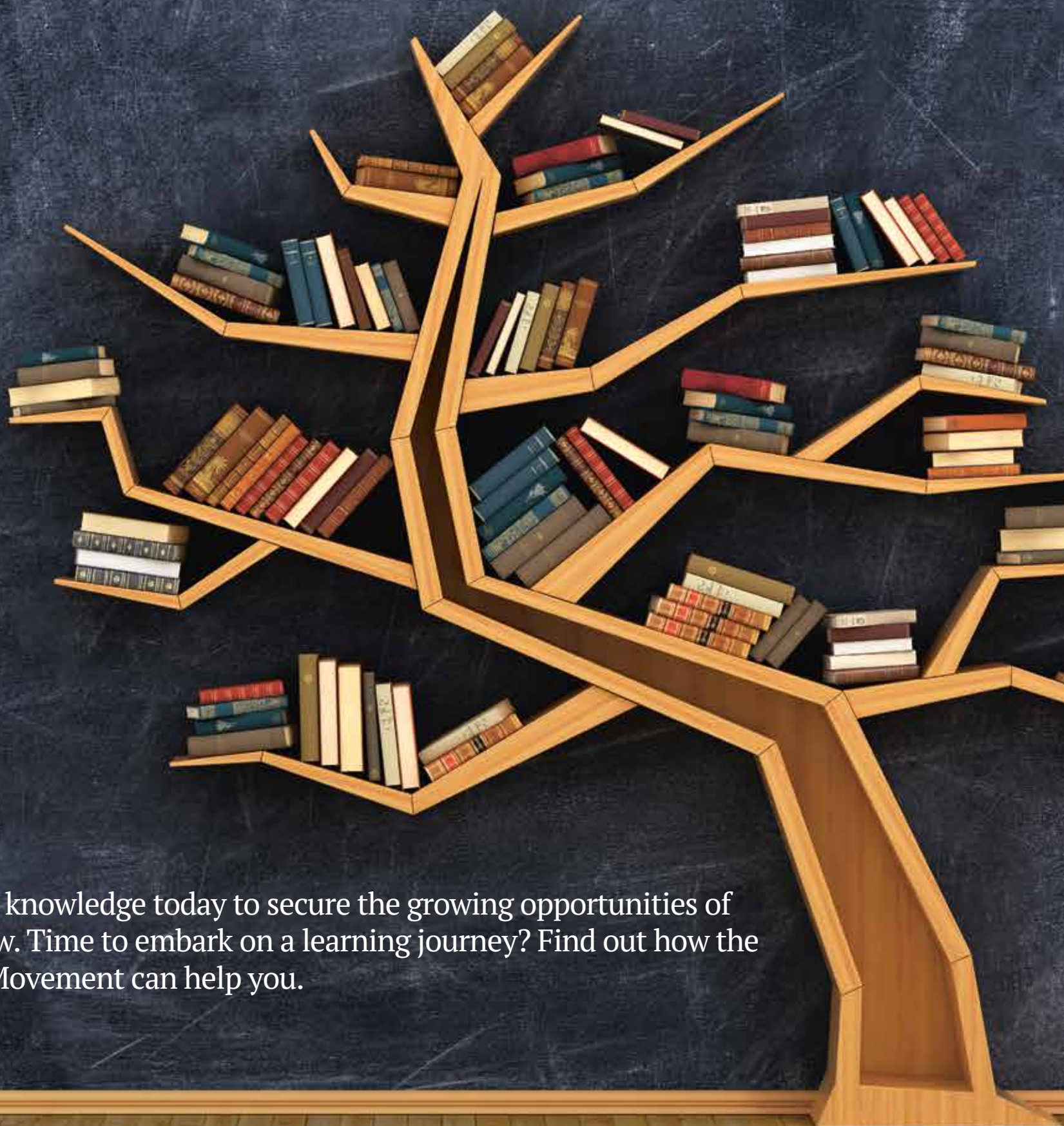


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BRANCHING OUT TO NEW SKILLS



Invest in knowledge today to secure the growing opportunities of tomorrow. Time to embark on a learning journey? Find out how the Labour Movement can help you.

TOP STORIES



4

Learning for Life!

We ask fellow working Singaporeans what they think about training and upgrading.



7

Appreciating Workers During the Festivities

The Labour Movement celebrates the Lunar New Year across the island with workers of all races, ages and ranks.

Also, drop by www.ntuc.org.sg/NTUCLNYVisit for more related photos and articles.



14

On the Domestic Front

All it takes is a little understanding and sensitivity for an employer and domestic worker to work better together. We talk to the Centre for Domestic Employees to find out how it can be done.

Embrace Change Before Change Embraces You

How ready are you for what tomorrow will bring? *NTUC This Week* takes a closer look at how training and upgrading will be your passport to progress in the future.

By **Jonathan Tan**

According to the 'Future of Jobs' report published by the World Economic Forum in 2016, technological disruption and increased digitalisation will be responsible for the loss of as many as 5.1 million jobs worldwide between now and 2020. At the same time, some 2 million new jobs will also be created.

Zooming in on Singapore, a media release by enterprise development agency SPRING Singapore on 25 January 2017 shared that the 16,300 enterprises it supported in 2016 are on course to generate \$7.8 billion in value to Singapore's economy. In the process, some 21,400 skilled jobs will be created, complementing the opportunities in sectors such as healthcare, information technology and education.

EMBRACING CHANGE

To tap these newfound opportunities, the report pointed to the need for continuous learning and upgrading of skills – a key focus area for the Labour Movement.

"The spirit of lifelong learning is vital because the new mantra is not learn, work and retire; but learn, work, learn, work, learn, work and then retire," said NTUC Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) Patrick Tay. He is also director of NTUC's

Future Jobs, Skills and Training (FJST) Department.

"At any life stage, we need to be ready with new skills, relevant to new jobs and resilient to new changes... Always keep an open and positive attitude and embrace change before change embraces you," said ASG Tay.

Besides determining the job opportunities of tomorrow, FJST will also identify the necessary skills required for those jobs.

A NECESSITY FOR EMPLOYMENT

"Skills are critical in a job search. Jobseekers should be hungry, persevering and embracing," said Gilbert Tan, CEO of NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute).

"Employers are always on a lookout for employees who can bring skills to add value to the company to increase its competitiveness and profitability. As such, to be employable, individuals need to constantly update their skills," he said.

He added that jobseekers need to be hungry in acquiring the necessary skills that will get them a foot through the door in their desired job.

"They should also show employers they





“At any life stage, we need to be ready with new skills, relevant to new jobs and resilient to new changes... Always keep an open and positive attitude and embrace change before change embraces you.”



NTUC Assistant Secretary-General and Future Jobs, Skills and Training Department Director Patrick Tay

“Skills are critical in a job search. Jobseekers should be hungry, persevering and embracing.”



NTUC e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) CEO Gilbert Tan

are keen and eager to learn and be persevering because skills often require time and practice to hone. With rapid changes in business processes, technology and automation, jobseekers need to embrace new ideas of what they need to learn and new ways of acquiring this knowledge,” he said.

A MEANS FOR PROGRESS

“For adult learners, skills are not acquired just by training but earned through training plus exposure plus hands-on experience,” said NTUC Assistant Director-General (ADG) Vivek Kumar. He is also director of NTUC U Associate.

With a view on career progression, ADG Vivek said: “It is critical that our working people can equip themselves with the most recent knowledge through continuous training and upgrading; and have the mindset to make the best use of evolving opportunities for both themselves and the companies they work for.”

To that end, U Associate has been collaborating with e2i to offer sectoral programmes for professionals. ADG Vivek shared that the programmes are developed to share unique industry perspectives with classroom learning and industry exposure opportunities with professional development of participants as an intended outcome.

SUPPORT FOR ALL WORKING PEOPLE

Advocacy aside, the Labour Movement is also home to a host of resources (*see page 6*) where working people can get access to training and upgrading opportunities. A list of upcoming U Associate sectoral programmes can also be found on the same page.

“Skills are not acquired just by training but earned through training plus exposure plus hands-on experience.”

NTUC Assistant Director-General and NTUC U Associate Director Vivek Kumar



TIPS ON COURSE SELECTION

Upgrading may be a means to progress in one's career, but picking the right course can be tricky.

To help in that selection process, ADG Vivek shared the three questions he would ask himself when choosing a programme.

• Personal or professional?

Are the skills meant to assist in personal development or in learning a whole new skillset for work?

• New skill?

Without prior experience, I would opt for a practitioner-oriented programme, ideally with a case-study approach or a project-based one to help me internalise the concepts.

• Networking opportunities?

Learning from my peers during classroom interaction is just as important as learning from the instructor. Hence the participant profile is important. Staying connected with course-mates and exchanging learning notes can be beneficial.

Street Poll: Learning for Life!

We stop a few strangers to find out their reasons for going back to the class and the responses have been interesting: fulfilment; progression; breaking personal barriers and seeing tomorrow today.

By **Jonathan Tan** and **Shukry Rashid**

ATTAINING FULFILMENT

“There are boundless things to learn in life, be it at work or leisure. I feel that fulfilment can only come with competency, and that comes from constantly learning and improving. Besides undertaking a CFA (Certified Financial Analyst) programme that will open up more opportunities for me in the finance industry, I’m also planning on enriching my personal interests with drum classes and even self-defence.”

Wilfred Lim, 29, Banker



GAINING NEW EXPERIENCES

“I’ve always been driven by a love for learning and am enthusiastic about new experiences. It keeps me inspired and helps me continue to be creative in the course of my work as an educator. Being hungry for unique perspectives or different skills help me role model the right learning attitudes to students. SkillsFuture has helped me with Microsoft Excel skills and I’m looking forward to being better equipped to analyse student data! I’m also interested in a fitness course next and want to work towards a healthier body and mind.”

Jodee Yap, 27, Civil Servant



PREPARING FOR TOMORROW

“There is no end to learning. We have to prepare ourselves for tomorrow’s changes, which are happening very fast. It was through my training and upskilling that I’ve been able to become an assistant supervisor today. As a union leader, we also have to be knowledgeable and competent in order to advise our members. I’m currently interested in taking up a Diploma in Employment Relations as well as counselling because I feel satisfaction in being able to serve others.”

Mastan Nachiyal Mohd, 54, Assistant Supervisor



BEING VERSATILE AND ADAPTABLE

“To me, training and upgrading is extremely important. No matter the industry, we need to constantly upgrade to stay relevant and be competitive. Especially in today’s uncertain economy and employment situation, skills upgrading is important as it prevents employees from being complacent and becoming too comfortable in one position. Even as an engineer, the last course I took last year was an Advanced Microsoft Excel course. For future skills upgrading, I’m looking at more hands-on skills as I feel that it will make me more versatile and adaptable should I make a career change.”

Esa Alhabshee, 37, Biomedical Engineer



PUSHING PERSONAL BARRIERS

“I personally believe lifelong learning helps us to continuously push the barrier of our ever-changing surroundings. The most important benefit from this is that it helps you empathise with others – by acquiring new skills, you’ll be able to better understand how others live. I’m planning to use my SkillsFuture credits to pick up a data-related course – something I’ve always wanted to understand better since I am in communications. A new language sounds really fun too!”

Apriani Kartika, 28, Senior Corporate Communications Executive



BENEFITS OUTWEIGH EFFORT

“Business today is very competitive and requires us to constantly learn new things to stay relevant. When I first began my photography business after graduation, I quickly realised that I neither had the capital nor the knowledge necessary to succeed. I decided to upgrade and expand my skills in video production as well. There was a lot of self-learning involved but I had to pair it up with going for courses on how to prepare for the digital age of video. I am constantly upgrading my skills – the last course I took was ‘Preparing for broadcast in a digital age’ back in 2015. There’s much more that I need to learn in the area of business management. I find that there’s often an inertia I have to overcome in order to take on something new, but very often, the benefits are much more than I expect.”

Daryl Goh, 34, Director and Filmmaker



BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

“Learning and upgrading allowed me to progress through the course of my career. When I first started my job, I had the technical skills, but picking additional skills such as managing people was very useful in enabling me to better handle my current portfolio. On a personal level, I’m taking my Masters in Business Administration because I realised that there’s a business aspect in almost everything we do in life, even at home. That’s been very helpful to me and I’ve been able to apply what I’ve learnt in class into the context of my actual work.”

Meleive Mirasol B Yanson, 48, Senior Medical Technologist



On Track with Lifelong Learning

Jason Ang, an LHUB trainee, plans to pursue more Workplace Safety and Health courses at LHUB.

NTUC LearningHub plans to roll out more courses to meet upskilling demands for the future economy.

Story by **Ramesh Subbaraman**
Photo by **Zheng Yihui**

The Labour Movement's training provider NTUC LearningHub (LHUB) marked a milestone when it enrolled its two millionth trainee in January 2017.

LHUB CEO Kwek Kok Kwong said their vision is to reach out to as many Singaporeans as possible so that they can be upskilled and reskilled with the aim of increasing their employability.

LHUB'S ACHIEVEMENTS

"In 2016, we saw a spike in the number of Singaporeans signing up for courses with us. We are encouraged by the endorsement given by our learners and are motivated to do even more as part of the Labour Movement in promoting lifelong learning," said Mr Kwek.

Since the launch of SkillsFuture Credit in January 2016, some 12,000 Singaporeans have used their account for training courses at LHUB till November 2016.

The top three popular courses were in basic IT, security and workplace safety and health.

Mr Kwek emphasised however that lifelong learning is not all about numbers but relevance.

"All the learners who come to us are working adults, with busy work schedules and lifestyles but they all take the effort to dedicate time and effort to learn. This is a crucial signal to the rest that they too must continue to learn to stay relevant and competitive," he added.

For the long term, LHUB will continue to roll out more courses that will help workers upskill and be ready for the future economy.

THE 2 MILLIONTH TRAINEE

And who is the 2 millionth trainee? He runs a

family business in landscaping and horticultural and has been taking workplace safety and health courses since 2015 and 2016. His name – Jason Ang.

The company employs 100 workers and one of the priority areas is to instill safe work practices among them when they are out in the field attending to pruning and uprooting trees.

"I found out about the Workplace Safety and Health (WSH) courses during my outings with the safety officer from my main contractor's company.

"I started to check where I could enroll for the course and I found NTUC LearningHub reliable", said 33-year-old Jason.

"I took two bizSAFE Level courses. I want to ensure every worker goes home safe to his family. On the ground, I will demonstrate to my workers the safety aspects they have to comply with. One of the most important lessons for them is to put on personal protection equipment at all times," he said.

Jason hopes to become a safety trainer in future and intends to take on more WSH courses to achieve that.



"All the learners who come to us are working adults, with busy work schedules and lifestyles but they all take the effort to dedicate time and effort to learn. This is a crucial signal to the rest that they too must continue to learn to stay relevant and competitive."

NTUC LearningHub CEO Kwek Kok Kwong

DID YOU KNOW...

NTUC LearningHub

- Started in 1982 as NTUC Computer Training Centre and was corporatised in 2004.
- Has upskilled over 2 million workers with 600 training courses and 1,300 certified trainers.
- 12,000 people have used their SkillsFuture credit for courses at LHUB up to November 2016.

i Please visit **www.ntuclearninghub.com** for more information on the institute and the courses available.



Upgrade, Upskill to be Future-Ready

You've heard it before – it is never too late to learn. In that vein and to get you off to an early start, we've put together the Labour Movement's list of classrooms.

By **Shukry Rashid**

FOR ALL WORKERS: NTUC'S E2I (EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYABILITY INSTITUTE)

Besides providing employment assistance to job seekers, e2i provides professional development programmes, employability camps and executive workshops. They also provide courses ranging from basic certification to masterclasses for various industries such as engineering, food and beverage, and banking and finance.

i For more information on the Professional Development Programme, visit e2i.com.sg.

FOR ALL WORKERS: NTUC LEARNINGHUB (LHUB)

Since 2004, LHUB has trained more than 2 million workers in the latest and relevant skills. Employers who want to improve their staff's competence, or workers looking to upgrade their skills, can choose from LHUB's over 600 available courses that cover topics such as infocomm technology, human resource, workplace safety and health, and security.

i For a full list of available courses, visit www.ntuclearninghub.com.

FOR PMES: NTUC LEARNINGHUB'S (LHUB) NEXT U

Next U – LHUB's executive training arm – was formed to help professionals, managers and executives (PMEs) upgrade their skills. Offering over 200 courses in productivity, innovation, service excellence and infocomm technology, Next U is equipping PMEs to be future-ready.

i For a full list of available courses, visit www.nextu.com.sg.

FOR WORKERS IN THE MARITIME INDUSTRY: WAVELINK MARITIME INSTITUTE

If you are looking to explore opportunities in the maritime industry, then the Wavelink Maritime Institute is the place to go. As the maritime training arm of the Singapore Maritime Officers' Union (SMOU), the institute provides full time cadet programmes in Nautical Studies and Marine Engineering as well as short courses. The institute is also equipped with the Wavelink Maritime Simulation Centre.

i For more information on the programmes, visit www.wavelink.com.sg.

FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROFESSIONALS: SEED INSTITUTE

If you are an early childhood education professional looking to upgrade your skills or are interested to join this expanding industry, SEED Institute is the place to get that start. The institute provides various programmes and courses, ranging from certificate to master's degree, with the aim of enhancing the quality of care and education of young children.

i For a full list of available courses, visit www.seedinstitute.edu.sg.

U Associate: Career Boosters

In engineering, advertising or interested to find out more about PUB's water projects? You may want to see what these programmes can do for you.

By **Jonathan Tan**



ENGINEERS LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

What is it: Targeted at empowering engineers to succeed in the workplace, NTUC has partnered The Institution of Engineers Singapore to offer two courses: the Young Engineers Leadership Programme and the Advanced Engineers Leadership Programme. Both will equip engineers with the necessary technical and personal skills, networking opportunities, and perspectives that will enable them to succeed in the workplace.

When is it: 3rd quarter of 2017

Where is it: The Institute of Engineers Singapore, 70 Bukit Timangi Road

How much is it: \$2,000, before subsidies from e2i and UTAP (Union Training Assistance Programme)

MARKETING LEADERS 2030

What is it: A six-module programme designed to help mid-level advertising and creative practitioners bridge skills gaps in digital marketing and gain knowledge on the latest technical approaches and best practices in the industry. This flagship programme was jointly-developed by Institute of Advertising Singapore, U Associate, e2i and Workforce Singapore.

When is it: Scheduled commencement in April 2017

Where is it: NTUC Centre, 1 Marina Boulevard

How much is it: \$2,240, before subsidies from e2i and UTAP (Union Training Assistance Programme)

ABC WATERS DESIGN WORKSHOP

What is it: Organised by the Singapore Institute of Landscape Architects (SILA), this half-day workshop is targeted at giving landscape architects, architects, planners, property developers and civil servants a deeper understanding of PUB's Active, Beautiful and Clean (ABC) Waters Programme, the codes and statutes governing the design of surface draining systems and details about the ABC Waters Professionals certification course.

When is it: 31 March 2017, 2pm to 6pm

Where is it: SILA Office, 79 Neil Road

How much is it: \$150 (SILA/U Associate/NTUC Members), \$200 (Non-Members)

i For more details on U Associate sectoral programmes, visit <http://bit.ly/1U1ui2o> or email uassociate@ntuc.org.sg.



Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and key Labour Movement leaders visit workers of Senoko Energy on the first day of the Lunar New Year.

PM LEE'S FIRST DAY *Visit*

Unemployment is up, but Singaporeans are still finding jobs, says Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

By **Shukry Rashid**

Even though the unemployment numbers in 2016 were up, Prime Minister (PM) Lee Hsien Loong said: "It's not so bad because people are finding jobs. And overall, we are having new jobs being created. Not as many as before, but enough so that Singaporeans are fully employed."

He iterated that retrenchments happen because of restructuring in the economy.

On economic growth, PM Lee said that he had hoped for 2–3 per cent growth in 2016. However, he said: "Overall, our growth last year is less than we had hoped for but more than we had expected, at 1.9 per cent."

He was speaking at a visit to Senoko Energy together with NTUC union leaders in the early morning on the first day of the Lunar New Year on 28 January 2017 to extend appreciation to essential workers who were hard at work during the holiday.

PM Lee also noted that the economy picked up towards the end of 2016, in particular, the manufacturing sector. He added: "We hope that it will continue into this year."

MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND TRUST

Citing the power industry as an example, PM Lee said that it has had to restructure many times in the past as technology advanced. He added that each time technology changed to become more efficient, it also meant change and disruption for workers – which sometimes led to job losses or redeployment.



However, thanks to the help of the Union of Power and Gas Employees (UPAGE) and its leaders, workers were able to endure the restructuring and advance.

He added: "I've known the union leaders in UPAGE for many generations now, from Nithiah Nandan to Nachiappan, and now Samad Wahab. There is a lot of mutual understanding and trust, which has been built up, which has enabled us to do this. And I think we have to do that, build it across the economy."

CHANGING WITH THE TIMES

In his Lunar New Year message on 27 January 2017, PM Lee said that the economy is an important area for renewal.

"In Singapore, we have always grown by renewing ourselves, taking our economy in fresh directions, opening new markets and fields of business. That is how we have stayed relevant to the world, vibrant and prosperous. That is what we must do again now, at this moment

when there is such uncertainty in the global environment."

The report by the Committee on the Future Economy (CFE), which is expected to be out soon, will map out Singapore's strategies for growth in the next 10–15 years.

IMPROVING LIVES

PM Lee added that the report will also identify new and promising industries and sectors that will create job opportunities of the future.

Thereafter, Budget 2017 will follow up with concrete measures to implement the CFE proposals, together with Singapore's immediate economic needs.

PM Lee acknowledged that economic restructuring is not easy for both workers and employers. He added that Singapore and its workers need to persevere with upgrading "because it is the only way to improve the lives of Singaporeans."

Spreading the Festive Cheer!



SG Chan, SMS Teo and key Labour Movement leaders, together with SBS Transit bus captains, enjoying the lion dance performance.

Just like how it has been since 1999, the Labour Movement visits and thanks essential services workers on the first day of the Lunar New Year. This year on 28 January 2017, whole-hearted appreciation goes out to workers in the power and public transport industries. Join us behind the scenes in this photo journey.

By **NTUC This Week** team



The Labour Movement spreading the festive cheer to SMRT bus captains at Yishun Bus Interchange.



SG Chan, accompanied by SMS Teo, giving out red packets to Tower Transit bus captains.

BUS TRANSPORT WORKERS

The silence of the night was broken by the thundering beat of drums and crashes of the lion dance troupe, signalling the commencement of the pre-dawn Lunar New Year visits by NTUC Secretary-General (SG) Chan Chun Sing, Senior Minister of State (SMS) for Transport Josephine Teo and key union leaders from the National Transport Workers' Union (NTWU) to Singapore's public transport workers.

The festive cheer was brought to over 350 bus captains, depot and interchange staff from SBS Transit, Tower Transit, SMRT and Go-Ahead Singapore.

At the visits, bus workers on duty were given red packets and mandarin oranges.



Go-Ahead Singapore bus captains looking forward to meeting SG Chan and union leaders from NTWU at Punggol Bus Interchange.



Tripartite partners completing the final calligraphy strokes on spring couplets, wishing SMRT workers happiness, health and prosperity.



PM Lee and his entourage tour Senoko Energy's power station to meet and thank workers carrying out their duties over the festive season.

ENERGY INDUSTRY WORKERS

While the country was waking up to the first day of the Lunar New Year, workers at Senoko Energy were at work so you could fire up your festive steamboat to enjoy your holiday with family and friends.

Prime Minister (PM) Lee Hsien Loong and Mrs Lee, together with NTUC President Mary Liew, Secretary-General (SG) Chan Chun Sing and Central Committee members, went to the power station to honour these workers.

PM Lee gave out red packets and mandarin oranges to 30 workers, as well as gifts provided by Mrs Lee.



Tripartite partners tossing up good fortune together to usher in the Year of the Rooster.

TAXI DRIVERS

In a separate visit on the same day, the National Taxi Association (NTA) visited the Changi Airport terminals to show appreciation to taxi drivers who continued to provide transport services to commuters during the Lunar New Year. Gift bags were distributed to more than 1,000 taxi drivers.



The National Taxi Association, along with Second Minister for Transport Ng Chee Meng, thanking taxi drivers for their contributions to the public transport industry in the wee hours of Lunar New Year's Day.



A BIG Thank You!

We meet up with the faces behind the Lunar New Year holiday shift to find out what keeps them and the Lion City going.

By Fawwaz Baktee and Ramesh Subbaraman

ANEESH AMBOOKEN, 29, DEPUTY TEAM LEADER, SENOKO ENERGY

Originally from India, Mr Aneesh has called Singapore home for more than 10 years. He studied in a local polytechnic and has spent all his professional life here. Mr Aneesh has learnt in his time in Singapore that to live harmoniously in a multi-racial society, people from all walks of life must come together in solidarity and support each other.

“In this company, we have Indians, Chinese and Malays. Everyone has their own holidays and festivities to celebrate. As a Christian, I will take my leave during Christmas and colleagues from other religions and races will cover me. So, during the Lunar New Year, I don’t mind doing the same for them.”



TAN CHOON SENG, 61, TECHNICAL OFFICER, SENOKO ENERGY

For 40 years, Mr Tan has worked in the power and gas industry. In fact, it was his first job and he will continue working in the industry until he retires. Over the years, Mr Tan has seen how the power industry has progressed. Mr Tan believes that the only way he has managed to keep up with the times was by taking it upon himself to upgrade.

“All my life I’ve only known shift work. So, you know, after working like that for 40 years, you get used to it. I’m

lucky that my family is supportive. It is important for workers who need to work on public holidays to have strong support at home or else it might cause a lot of stress.”

ABDUL RAZAK ABU AMIN, 49, TECHNICAL OFFICER, SENOKO ENERGY

Mr Razak believes that every worker has to do his or her part to help the power and gas industry progress. For him, objectives set must be met in order to keep the power plant running 24/7, as failing to do so would have detrimental effects on Singapore.

“Someone has to do the job. It is my duty and I am proud to serve my nation this way, even if I have to sacrifice public holidays. I feel recognition for our job is secondary compared to the tasks we have to carry out day-in, day-out.”



CHONG GEOK TANG, 65, CHIEF BUS CAPTAIN, SBS TRANSIT

He spent half his professional life as a contractor and had only come into the bus industry 21 years ago. Despite being 65, Mr Chong is living proof that even at his age, you can still contribute to the nation. He believes professionalism is paramount to becoming a bus captain. And sometimes, being professional means having to sacrifice family time to work on Lunar New Year.



“Those my age have a lot more to contribute to the bus industry and to Singapore. We bring with us vast experience that we can impart to the young ones. As a Chief Bus

Captain, I mentor the new staff and guide them on the bus routes, safety and professional conduct. We senior citizens are also willing to sacrifice holidays to contribute to society, and me working on the first day of the Lunar New Year shows this is true.”

**YAP HONG HWI, 41, BUS CAPTAIN,
GO-AHEAD SINGAPORE**

He has worked in a factory, a karaoke lounge and even a tyre shop. To Mr Yap, all these jobs are incomparable to being a bus captain. Mr Yap has been in the bus industry for 15 years and has never regretted his decision. What attracted him to drive buses is the stability of the job, the benefits provided by his employers, and an opportunity to contribute to the nation.

“I have a passion for imparting knowledge to younger bus captains. I want to let them know that you should not drive buses for only the salary that you get every month. We make Singapore's economy move. To become a good bus captain, attitude towards the job is important. That is why I work on Lunar New Year – to set an example to the younger employees.”

**SAMUEL LIM, 55, CHIEF BUS CAPTAIN, SMRT**

With 21 years of experience in the bus industry, Mr Lim has worked on the first day of the Lunar New Year many times. He said many passengers show him gestures of appreciation when they see him working on public holidays, with some even giving him red packets.

“We definitely have to work on Lunar New Year or else there will be a shortage of bus captains. It's nice to see families dress up and go visiting. Sometimes it even feels like I'm

part of the celebrations. But it saddens me to hear stories of our fellow bus drivers being abused by passengers. I want to take this time to remind that we bus drivers are human too. We are professionals so I hope members of the public give us due respect as we carry out our duties.”

**SEE LI LIAN, 57, TAXI DRIVER,
COMFORT DELGRO**

Having spent eight years as a taxi driver, Mdm See is all too familiar with how working on a public holiday feels like. Previously an insurance agent, Mdm See said her move to drive taxis was a calling that she had been waiting to answer. During Lunar New Year this year, she decided to provide much sought-after taxi services, while covering her relief drivers who were celebrating the festive season.

“During public holidays, Singaporeans need taxis to move around, so by working I actually help smoothen their transportation needs. That is important to me.”

**SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

Share a Taxi

SMRT Taxis launches Singapore's first taxi sharing scheme for drivers

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

Since 1 February 2017, SMRT Taxis has been rolling-out taxis at selected areas in Singapore for rent to drivers with a valid Taxi Driver Vocational License (TDVL). Drivers are now able to rent the taxis in three-hourly blocks by picking up and returning the taxi at a location most convenient to them.

SMRT Taxis made the announcement on 26 January 2017 as part of its efforts to offer potential drivers greater income opportunities and more flexibility in managing their work schedule. The taxi operator also aims to increase the availability of taxis on the road to keep up with commuter demands. Called the SMRT Taxi Share, the initiative is a first in the industry.

Taxi drivers are not required to purchase season parking for the rented vehicle and do not have to seek a relief driver to cover the cost of the rented vehicle, added SMRT Taxis. Servicing and maintenance of the taxis will also be undertaken by the company.

IMPROVING THE INDUSTRY

“In Singapore's evolving transport landscape, there is a growing demand among taxi partners for greater flexibility in planning their work schedule. SMRT Taxi Share enhances utilisation of assets and improves our operational efficiency. The scheme allows us to tap on a large number of inactive TDVL holders and have taxis ply the road according to commuter demand,” said SMRT Taxis and Private Hire Services Managing Director Tony Heng.

National Taxi Association Executive Advisor Ang Hin Kee called the initiative a move in the right direction and encouraged more taxi operators “to continue with different rental schemes to meet the different needs of drivers.”

For more information on the SMRT Taxi Share and rental rates, log on to **www.taxishare.com.sg**.

Appreciating Workers During the Festivities!

The Labour Movement family celebrates the Lunar New Year across the island with workers of all races, ages and ranks.

ATTRACTIONS, RESORTS & ENTERTAINMENT UNION (AREU)



AREU distributes oranges to 1,000 union members from Marina Bay Sands, Resorts World Sentosa and Raffles Country Club.



SINGAPORE ORGANISATION OF SEAMEN (SOS)



SOS organises a very special Lunar New Year luncheon for more than 1,000 members and partners.



SINGAPORE PORT WORKERS UNION (SPWU) AND PORT OFFICERS' UNION (POU)



Union officials from SPWU and POU lead the way as SPWU Advisor Ang Wei Neng (right photo, third from right) and PSA management follow their visit to workers on the first day of the Lunar New Year.



U ASSOCIATE



U Associate PropertyGuru holds an appreciation luncheon and awards ceremony with their partners.





Tightening Protection Gaps for Migrant Workers

Not all foreign workers have the financial means to seek redress when done wrong. The Migrant Workers' Centre has two suggestions on how this can be remedied.

By Shukry Rashid

In response to The Straits Times articles "Gap in law to protect workers" on 24 January 2017 and "Give Labour Court more power to protect workers" two days later, Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC) Chairman Yeo Guat Kwang said: "In the last two years, the MWC has been assisting migrant workers to enforce Labour Court orders against their non-compliant employers, particularly because most migrant workers caught in such situations do not have the financial means to pursue enforcement on their own."

MWC has also been tapping on the Migrant Workers' Assistance Fund (MWAF) to help workers who wish to enforce their labour court orders against their employers. The assistance ranges from \$1,000–\$3,000.

SUGGESTIONS

He acknowledged that while the system seeks to address the needs of migrant workers, those like Mr Sujan Ahmed "fall through the cracks."

Mr Sujan had a fall in May 2015, resulting in permanent injuries. He was owed more than \$9,000 in compensation by his employer.

To address this issue, he gave the Manpower Ministry two suggestions.

First, he urged the authorities to publicise successful prosecutions, which will send a strong example of non-tolerance to all employers.

Second, he suggested to improve the monitoring and enforcing mandatory Work Injury Compensation Insurance so that workers will have greater assurance.

Labour Market Advance Release 2016

Labour Movement response: There is a need to look at future jobs, skills and training so that workers stay ready, relevant and resilient.

By Ramesh Subbaraman

Singapore's unemployment rate went up for residents and citizens both in the fourth quarter and for the whole of 2016. Redundancies were also higher for the whole of 2016. The findings were released by the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) on 26 January 2017 through the Labour Market Advance Release for 2016.

LABOUR MOVEMENT'S CONCERNS

In a Facebook posting, NTUC Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) and Director of the Future Jobs, Skills and Training Department (FJST) Patrick Tay expressed concern over the trend.

Turning to the redundancies, ASG Tay said the layoff trend in the unionised sector corresponded with the national figures.

"While redundancy may be inevitable in certain circumstances, we urge companies to carry it out in a fair, responsible and sensitive way. With continued uncertainties and challenges this year and the coming years, it further amplifies the need for us to look at future jobs, skills and training so that our workers stay ready, relevant and resilient," added ASG Tay.

FOURTH QUARTER NUMBERS

For the fourth quarter of 2016, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate rose from 2.1 per cent in September 2016 to 2.2 per cent in December 2016.

For residents, it was from 2.9 per cent to 3.2 per cent and for citizens, 3.0 per cent to 3.5 per cent.

According to MOM, this occurred even as employment grew with more people entering the labour force to look for work.

With the seasonal hiring for year-end festivities, total employment grew in the fourth quarter of 2016, compared to the contraction in the third quarter.

Redundancies were also higher in the fourth quarter of 2016, with 5,300 workers laid off compared to 4,220 in the third quarter.

FULL YEAR 2016

For the whole of last year, Singapore's unemployment rate rose to its highest since 2010. For 2016, it was 2.1 per cent. Meanwhile, local employment went up by an estimated 10,700 in 2016, rebounding from the flat growth in 2015.

Foreign employment, excluding foreign domestic workers, contracted in 2016, the first time since 2009. For the whole of 2016, redundancies rose to 19,000, mainly due to restructuring and a slower economy.

MOM emphasised that redundancies have been trending up since 2010, but have remained lower than the recessionary high in 2009.



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ANDROID

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On the Domestic Front

All it takes is some understanding and sensitivity between an employer and a domestic worker to work better together. We talk to Centre for Domestic Employees to find out how it can be done.

By **Fawwaz Baktee**



CDE Chairman Yeo Guat Kwang snaps a quick photo with volunteers at the centre's one year anniversary celebrations.



Volunteers were treated to a day of fun-filled activities as part of CDE's one-year anniversary celebrations.



CDE hopes to reduce the possibility of issues and conflicts between employers and their domestic employees through its Handy Guides series.

“CDE [Centre for Domestic Employees] is my home and family for almost three months. Thank you is not enough for all the things you did. Priceless ... From the bottom of my heart, thank you so much,” said Hazel, in a text message to one of CDE's staff.

She is a Filipino foreign domestic worker (FDW) whom the centre sheltered while her case was undergoing police investigations.

Hazel is not alone in receiving aid from CDE. The centre has attended to 517 cases, and helped resolve 83 per cent of them, while the rest are ongoing. The centre has also sheltered 110 domestic workers since opening its doors in January last year.

The figures were revealed in a social report card released at the centre's one year anniversary celebrations held at the Singapore Flyer Event Hall on 22 January 2017.

The three most common issues by FDWs were salary disputes, requests for transfer of employer and physical abuse, which collectively constituted nearly 50 per cent of the total number of cases the centre handled in 2016.

Among those CDE assisted, 28.4 per cent were Indonesian, 18.5 per cent were Myanmarese, 17.2 per cent were Filipinos and 9.2 per cent were Indian. A majority of these cases came through the centre's 24-hour helpline.

CALL FOR E-PAYMENT

Speaking at the sidelines of the anniversary celebrations, NTUC Assistant Director-General (ADG) and CDE Chairman Yeo Guat Kwang



CDE Executive Director Shamsul Kamar reveals the centre's one year report card.

highlighted that it should be mandatory for employers to pay their FDWs, adding that currently, salary disputes arise as there is no standardised wage payment system.

“Some employers act as the banker and help the agencies to collect loan repayments and some help FDWs safe-keep the money, which I think is not desirable ... CDE is now working with financial institutions like banks and financial associations to find out how we can come up with a better structure that can help domestic employers and FDWs resolve this,” said ADG Yeo.

FUTURE PLANS

Key milestones for the upcoming year will include launching an industry survey to understand the issues and concerns facing FDWs and employers in February this year, and the opening of a new shelter that will increase the centre's capacity to house FDWs from 50 to about 150 at any one time.

HANDY GUIDES FOR A HEALTHIER WORKING RELATIONSHIP

Reflecting on the past year, the centre has learned that a healthy employer-employee relationship reduces the possibility of issues and conflicts.

“Having a healthy relationship is the cornerstone of any employment arrangement. Likewise in the case of FDWs and their employers, a healthy relationship can help reduce the possibility of miscommunication and misunderstanding,” said CDE Executive Director Shamsul Kamar.

To promote better relationships, the centre launched the first of its Handy Guides series at its celebrations. The guidebooks aim to bridge the cultural divide between the employer and FDW. The guidebooks are available in four different bilingual versions of English along with Indonesian, Burmese, Tagalog and Tamil.

“With the Handy Guides series, CDE wants to reinforce and promote the need for a healthier relationship between both FDWs and their employers,” added Mr Shamsul.

i The guidebooks are available at CDE's office or online at www.cde.org.sg.

Letters to CDE

Many domestic workers who have been helped by CDE write in to express their gratitude. Read some of their heartfelt thank you cards here:



LOVE
YOU
CDE

Date:-30/08/2016

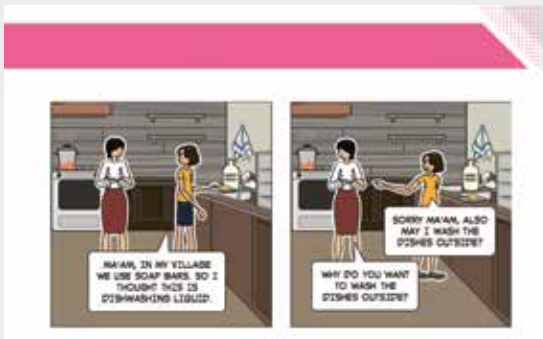
To All CDE Madam and Sir
Thankyou for your help and your support to me. It really big things for my life. I never forget your help and your love.
It Sometimes I misbehave I am really Sorry from my heart. hope you all also remember me and Once again Thankyou for all help.
Love you CDE.
With Love
PoSokha

To CDE Madams Sir's
Thank you so much for helping me out during these very difficult times. Your help has been invaluable to me and I don't know how I would have ~~managed~~ managed without your help and support.

Once again Thank you so much for help me I Sincerely appreciate you all

With
Love & care
Urmila
(India)

I love CDE MAM because they take care for me very well.



A Special Bond

“Empathy is what makes us human ... We must all learn to treat others like how we want to be treated,” says the Lee family. Their story is intertwined with their domestic helper’s.

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

Sometimes the lines blur for the better, as is the following case: at times, you will find 38-year-old Juliet Madrillo sitting at the same table as the Lee family, sipping tea, and minding their three-year-old toddler.

“I am lucky because my employers treat me well. They treat me like I am a part of the family. To be honest, I don’t feel like their maid but a family member,” said Juliet.

“She’s like a sister to me. Honestly, I don’t know what I would do without her,” added Mrs Lee.

Juliet has been working for the Lee family since 2008. Although she is happy with her situation now, she has also had her fair share of difficult times.

BIGGER DREAMS

Growing up in the Philippines, life was hard for Juliet and her family of 11. Often, her family had to scrape to survive. Juliet was the fourth child among nine siblings and from a very young age, she had to work on the family farm, harvesting rice.

“As a farmer, my father didn’t have much money. I remember looking at other families who had more than us. They could afford to eat whatever nice food they wanted. But for my family, we sometimes didn’t even have enough food to eat,” she said.



Being a domestic helper was not her first choice of work, Juliet confessed, as she dreamt of becoming either a preschool teacher or a caregiver. At the age of 23, she enrolled herself in a Bachelor’s Degree in Elementary Education programme but she failed to meet the requirements to earn the degree.

To make ends meet for her family, Juliet took on a job as a domestic helper in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where she worked for two years.

“If I had remained unemployed, I would have burdened my family instead of helping them. I didn’t want that,” she said.

LIFE IN SINGAPORE

She came to Singapore to work after her contract in UAE ended in 2007, and her life started to turn around for the better when she met the Lee family.

“I had to continue to work as a maid because I didn’t have enough savings as I sent all my money home every month. After finishing my contract in UAE, I was still poor,” said Juliet.

Mr and Mrs Lee were supportive of Juliet when they found out that she had a passion for learning. They enrolled her in English, cooking and computer classes. But the class that created the most impact for Juliet was the financial literacy class by AIDHA, a partner of the Centre for Domestic Employees.

There, Juliet learnt how to plan and manage her own business. With the help of the Lee family, Juliet will be opening a rice mill back in her home country in 2018.

Mr Lee said: “We helped her because we want her to succeed in life. We told her before ‘One day, when you have your own business and succeed, you will help others too.’ And I hope she does succeed.”

With gratitude in her eyes, Juliet murmured “thank you” when she heard Mr Lee’s words.

“I hope to not only make my parents proud, and give them a good life but I want my second family to be proud of what I achieve too. I really hope my business will succeed,” said Juliet.

Mr Lee added: “It is not a special thing that we are doing for Juliet. Empathy is what makes us human. I don’t understand how employers can mistreat their domestic workers. We must all learn to treat others like how we want to be treated.”

“I am lucky because my employers treat me well. They treat me like I am a part of the family. To be honest, I don’t feel like their maid but a family member.”

Juliet Madrillo