

"thisweek

19 MARCH 2017
60 CENTS
MCI (P) 102/12/2016

WOMEN IN FOCUS

We have come a long way in recognising the important roles women play in society, but has the journey come to an end? This week, we zoom in on issues that affect women and find out what else the Labour Movement is pushing for to further uplift their lives.



26-year-old engineer Laura Tan believes women can do whatever they put their minds to. (Read story on page 4.)

TOP STORIES



7 Biz Talk with Josephine Kwan
Singapore Association of Administrative Professionals President Josephine Kwan tells us about how the association is working with the Labour Movement to help those in the administrative industry.



8 Helping Displaced Workers
The Labour Movement launches the PIVOT programme to help displaced professionals transition into new jobs.



12 A Heart for Migrant Workers
We showcase Quek and Quek Civil Engineering whose progressive dormitory practices has helped create a home away from home for its foreign workers.

ICYMI

NTUC Women's Committee Chair K Thanalethimi pens her International Women's Day Message 2017. Read it at <http://bit.ly/2m18plQ>.

ONLINE NOW



Leveling the Playing Field

Singapore may still have some way to go in the gender equality race, but NTUC's approach may be gaining some traction.

By **Fawwaz Baktee**

While women around the world have to take to the streets to highlight their important role in the workforce, women leaders in Singapore are pushing for equality through dialogue and diplomacy.

"Women in Singapore have not reached our potential for equality. Many things need to be done before we can achieve this. For example, only two out of 10 board members are female. The labour participation rate of women is still not good enough.

"When we look at other data, there is still a wage gap between men and women in Singapore [figures from 2015 show that for every dollar a man makes, a woman makes 89 cents, according to the World Economic Forum]. To say we have succeeded, there must be good indicators. Data is showing that the journey isn't over yet," said NTUC Women's Committee Chair and Labour Nominated Member of Parliament K Thanalethimi, in a recent interview with *NTUC This Week*.

LABOUR PARTICIPATION RATE

In Singapore, like many countries in the world, women outnumber men – with the ratio being about 100 women for every 96 men, according to the Ministry of Social and Family Development. Despite this, the labour participation rate of women in Singapore in 2016 stood at 60.4 per cent, as compared to the 76.2 per cent for men.

The Labour Movement has been working hard to get women outside the workforce back to work by advocating for initiatives such as the Returnship Programme – a programme similar to an internship, to help women ease back into the workforce.

"The Returnship Programme can empower women. Once they are independent economically, they will be more active in their roles at work and within their families. Once they are in the workforce, they may not need to be dependent on anyone and instead can help to give back to their families and communities in many ways," said Ms Thanalethimi, who believes that having more women in the workforce may improve the chance for better equality.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

According to a Manpower Ministry survey released in January this year, 41 per cent of women outside the labour force cited family responsibilities as their main reason for not working.

Contact Points



All the names, numbers and places worth noting if you are an employer planning to enhance work-life balance or a woman looking for employment and training opportunities.

WORK-LIFE GRANT

Are you a company looking to make the workplace better for your employees? Then you may want to find out more on how the WorkPro Work-Life Grant can help you with initiatives such as implementing flexible work arrangements. The grant is jointly developed by the Ministry of Manpower, the then-Singapore Workforce Development Agency (now Workforce Singapore), NTUC and Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF).

SNEF and NTUC are the official programme partners for WorkPro.

NTUC

☎ 6213 8383

✉ workpro@ntuc.org.sg

🌐 www.ntuc.org.sg

SNEF

☎ 6290 7694

✉ workpro@snef.org.sg

🌐 www.snef.org.sg

📌 More information can also be found at www.wda.gov.sg/workpro and www.mom.gov.sg/workpro.

TRAINING & JOB OPPORTUNITIES

If you are looking for employment or upgrading opportunities, visit NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) at e2i.com.sg.

U WOMEN'S NETWORK

U Women's Network is an interactive online learning platform created by NTUC's Women and Family Unit for all women to learn, discuss and generate conversations about the evolution of work, technology and skills.

📌 Visit U Women's Network at www.facebook.com/uwomensnetwork.

NTUC U FAMILY

The Labour Movement's voice for working families, NTUC U Family is all about encouraging and building strong and happy families through championing work-life harmony. Join U Family and receive regular updates on events and programmes, plus a chance to join in a bigger conversation for things that matter in life.

📌 For more information, visit U Family at www.facebook.com/NTUCUFamily or www.ufamily.org.sg.



K Thanalethimi



Noorfarahin Ahmad

This highlights the role of the employer in helping employees juggle work and family life through progressive practices such as flexible-work arrangements and work-from-home schemes, according to Ms Thanalethimi.

NTUC Women's Committee Vice-Chair Noorfarahin Ahmad echoed this and believes that the importance of such family-friendly schemes to get women to return to work cannot be denied.

"Women play multi-faceted roles and many will consider their families' situation before joining the workforce. The work-life policies are something we must strengthen among other things. We can have job vacancies for women, but if they are not given suitable arrangements, many will not want to come back to the workforce.

"Women must also be proactive in upgrading themselves. They must take on training opportunities in order to stay relevant in today's workforce," she added.

Hasliza Ali, 41, understands this importance and has taken the initiative to upgrade herself. (Read her story on page 5.)

The Labour Movement has also over the years worked with employers and government agencies to develop initiatives such as the WorkPro Work-Life Grant to incentivise companies to implement such schemes.

One such company who has tapped on the grant is Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts who has introduced pro work-life initiatives for its employees. (Read full story on page 5.)

BOOSTING SUNRISE INDUSTRIES

According to the Manpower Ministry survey, a majority of women outside the workforce with a degree are also in the prime working ages of 25 to 54 – individuals the women's committee believes are capable of strengthening Singapore's workforce.

For a start, it is putting in efforts to help women who hold either a degree or diploma in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) related fields to come back to work and seize opportunities in these growing industries.

According to another recent survey by NTUC's Women and Family Unit on 529 women looking to re-enter the workforce, of the 22 women with a degree in engineering, less than half worked in an engineering job in their last formal employment.

"The participation for women in STEM industries is very weak. In fact, women make up less than 50 per cent in all these industries. These industries need workers and they are sunrise. They provide a lot of opportunities for women. We will continue to push for women, especially those with the right qualifications, to join and boost these industries," said Ms Thanalethimi.

One woman who has no problems in joining the engineering industry is 26-year-old Laura Tan who believes women are also capable of having successful careers in male-dominated industries. (See page 4 for full story.)



Engineering a Career

Laura's advice to women interested in the engineering industry is to stop worrying and just take on the challenge.

Story and Photo by **Fawwaz Baktee**

It was the women's floorball finals at the 2015 South East Asian Games where Singapore played Thailand in front of a full-house crowd at ITE College Central. With both teams tied at three goals each after the final whistle, it was all up to a penalty shootout to decide on the champion.

Much to the delight of the crowd, the shootout ended in Singapore's favour and the national team bagged a gold medal. Laura Tan, 26, was part of that floorball team.

"I had to juggle intense training and my full-time job, and it was quite challenging. But it was worth it at the end of the day," recalled Laura.

Off-court, Laura is a full-time engineer who graduated with a mechanical engineering degree at the National University of Singapore in 2014.

COMPETITIVE AND INQUISITIVE

A self-confessed hands-on person, Laura had always seen herself in a career that required her to be active. Becoming an engineer and floorball player was a natural choice.

"I've always been interested in machines and



airplanes. I was inquisitive and I liked to fix things a lot. As a child, I was always looking for something to fix. So I knew from an early age that an office job that required me to sit at my desk all day long would not be suitable for me," she said.

True to her competitive spirit, being in a male-dominated industry such as engineering does not faze her. She is currently a manufacturing engineer, overseeing the production of solar panels at REC Solar. There are currently three females out of the 12 engineers in her department.

"I was in the science stream back in junior college, where there were 19 guys and only five girls in my class. When I was in university, most of my course mates were guys too. So when I came to this job, I was kind of used to being one of the only few girls," she said.

BE FEARLESS

Laura advises women who are interested in the engineering industry to not be afraid and to take on the challenge.

"First you have to try, don't be afraid of the unknown. Take things one step at a time. When you start work as an engineer, no matter your gender, those in your team will listen to you as they know that you are in charge. You

have to believe in yourself and they will trust in what you say and your expertise.

"Don't worry about the male-dominance in the industry. From experience, gender doesn't mean much. In fact, because female engineers do things and, to a certain extent, think differently, we tend to come up with good solutions to problems," she said.

“First you have to try, don't be afraid of the unknown. Take things one step at a time. When you start work as an engineer, no matter your gender, those in your team will listen to you as they know that you are in charge. You have to believe in yourself and they will trust in what you say and your expertise.”

Giving Up Not an Option

“I had to move on and not give up. I trust that life will be fair to me. If you believe in yourself, others will too,” shares Hasliza on her quest for always wanting to do better.

Story and Photo by **Avelyn Ng**

Hasliza Ali, 41, is a divorcee and mother of two daughters, aged 12 and 14. In September 2012, she went through a rough patch in her life when she found herself unemployed for about six months.

Back then, she was working as a sales administrator and personal assistant. Being the sole breadwinner, Hasliza sought career progression and better remuneration. Observing that her company was not doing well and was unlikely to offer those to her, she decided to enrol into a part-time course to pave the way for other career opportunities.

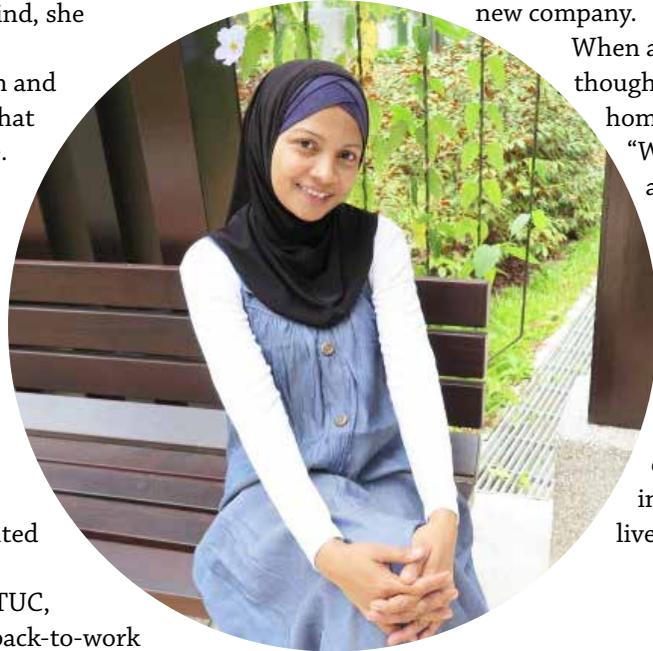
AGAINST ALL ODDS

Thanks to the then NTUC-Surrogate Employer Programme and the Ministry of Social and Family Development’s Home Ownership Plus Education Scheme which helps low-income families upgrade to build a better future, Hasliza managed to complete a fully-subsidised LCCI Double Diploma in Business Admin and Private Secretary.

Hasliza left her company thereafter, but numerous job applications online came to naught due to fierce competition. She had to take up odd jobs conducting surveys and providing beauty services to cope with the daily expenses. Nevertheless, even as thoughts of her flat rental and daughters’ future nagged at the back of her mind, she remained positive.

“I had to move on and not give up. I trust that life will be fair to me. If you believe in yourself, others will, too,” shared Hasliza.

After half a year, she visited a Community Development Council for assistance. The representatives pointed her to job fairs and workshops under NTUC, including a talk for back-to-work



mums and a session on building good resumes. Eventually, after a call centre training, she was successfully placed at I-Vic International in a customer service role.

STAYING MOTIVATED

Since, Hasliza has not only remarried, but was most recently head hunted by a past client to join a global audit firm as a corporate secretarial manager. She will commence work over there as this paper goes to print.

There is no full-stop in Hasliza’s lifelong learning journey. She is currently studying accountancy on her own initiative. She aims to be able to take on accountancy-related tasks and earn the \$500 increment from her new company.

When asked if she ever thought of being a stay-at-home mum, Hasliza said: “Working makes me feel alive. Every day I have a purpose, something to do, somewhere to dress up for.

“While small, I make a difference to my boss, the company or the customers. With dual income, we can also live more comfortably.”

Six years ago when her son was a toddler, Jessica Ong decided to leave her job in the hospitality industry to take better care of him.

“The job I had was really stressful. I had to work really long hours and did not have time for my son or family... I needed a switch in careers,” said the 39-year-old.

Soon after leaving the industry, Jessica found new employment at the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), which she said was worlds apart from her previous workplace.

“I was happier when I joined NAFA. I found out they have a very family-friendly environment, and the management is generally supportive of families,” said Jessica, who today is an events and sponsorship manager at the school.

The Supportive Employer

“If we talk about work-life friendly practices, we believe it is part and parcel of creating a workforce that is happy and engaged,” says one organisation. Here’s a grateful employee’s story.

Story and Photo by **Fawwaz Baktee**

THE RIGHT WORKPLACE

The family-friendly environment proved to be what Jessica needed when she had her second child back in 2013. Her daughter was born with a congenital heart condition.

“It became more challenging for me as a working mum. My girl’s condition was actually quite severe. She had to go through multiple operations. When my girl was discharged from the hospital, she had a feeding tube and oxygen support. So you can imagine having to work after going through all that,” she recalled.

Jessica extended her maternity leave and

when she came back to work, her management allowed her to work from home a few days a month. But there came a point when she felt very guilty for continuing to work even though her daughter needed her at home.

“For working mums, generally speaking, there’s always this thought of not spending enough time with their children, not being able to see them through their milestones and all that. But for mothers with children with special needs like me, it’s far more challenging,” Jessica said.

At the brink of quitting her job, she had a discussion with her bosses to find possible avenues as she still wanted to continue working. NAFA came up with a solution for Jessica and offered her a flexible work arrangement where she only needed to come to work three days a week.

“Without these arrangements, I don’t think I would have been able to continue working. I’m really grateful to the management for being progressive in their practices,” she said.

PROGRESSIVE PRACTICES

Last year, NAFA also tapped on the WorkPro Work-Life Grant to implement new family-friendly schemes such as telecommuting and staggered work hours for all its employees. The school now plans to set up a childcare centre and a lactation room at its premises.

“If we talk about work-life friendly practices, we believe it is part and parcel of creating a workforce that is happy and engaged. This is the driving force behind what we do,” said NAFA President Chia Mia Chiang.





Ever wondered what it would be like to work in a startup and what happens within the walls of this exciting entrepreneurial venture? Let corporate-to-startup career switcher Justin Lee tell you his story.

Story and Photo by **Jonathan Tan**

When Justin Lee was first invited to join a startup co-founded by an ex-colleague, he turned it down.

“Back then, like most people who had never tasted a startup career, I was hesitant. I wasn’t entirely familiar with the idea he wanted to execute. I had a stable career at SingPost, and I thought to myself that maybe I’d set another milestone and get a promotion first before considering something else,” said the 29-year-old, whose previous role was in business development.

In the year that followed, regular engagements with said ex-colleague saw Justin learn more about the company’s product, its rate of progress and the potential it held. These interactions eventually led him to make the transition into the technology startup Shopback in November 2015 as its chief product officer. He has not looked back since.

ADAPTING TO THE CHANGE

“The biggest difference is the grind. When you move from a corporate environment where it is stable to a startup environment, one of the biggest learning points is that you’re not moving into a more glamorous or sexy lifestyle,” Justin shared.

Putting aside the longer working hours,

Embarking On A STARTUP Career

intense pace of work and personal liability for mistakes, Justin prefers to look at the potential of the enterprise.

Describing how he managed the transition, Justin said that he believed in ShopBack’s products and relished being able to feel real ownership of the work he was doing in the development and implementation of the digital platform. ShopBack is a gateway platform that enables users to receive cash rebates from shopping with its partner merchants. The company is now looking to expand its presence in the region and grow its user and merchant base.

“Because you’re working with less resources, whatever you do will affect other people. You can’t go in with the mindset that this is my territory and you won’t go beyond it... You need to go beyond your scope of work and think as a team.

“Come in with an open mind, learn how things work before imposing your own experience, judgement and prejudice,” said Justin.

TIPS FOR JOBSEEKERS

Just as no two businesses operate the same way, Justin encourages jobseekers interested in forging a career in this vibrant space to first learn more about the prospective company they are considering joining. Networking, said

Justin, is one of the best ways to learn more.

“Being able to attend a career fair is a great avenue to understand the opportunities in startups,” shared Justin. He added that access to communities like NTUC’s U Startup network can also help one understand the technology space better.

GOOD TO KNOW

STARTUP CAREER FAIR 2017

To help jobseekers discover career opportunities with startups, Action Community for Entrepreneurship, an NTUC U Associate, has partnered the Labour Movement to organise the inaugural Startup Career Fair 2017 on 30 March 2017.

Companies like ShopBack, Glint, TheSmartLocal and more than 100 other Singapore-based startups will be offering some 300 work opportunities during the fair.

When: 30 Mar 2017, 4pm to 8pm

Where: ACE Ideation Centre, Block 79 Ayer Rajah Crescent, #01-13

i For more details and registration, visit www.eventnook.com/event/startupcareerfair2017/home.



BIZ \$ TALK WITH JOSEPHINE KWAN

Singapore Association of Administrative Professionals' President Josephine Kwan tells us about the evolving roles in the administrative industry and how they are working with the Labour Movement.

Story and Photo by **Jonathan Tan**

“**T**hough administrative professionals carry a similar title, it could mean different job scopes and even different salary ranges, depending on the company and industry,” said Singapore Association of Administrative Professionals’ (SAAP) President Josephine Kwan.

With some 30 years of experience in the industry, she shared that professionals are now often required to possess additional competencies to do higher-level work. This could mean roles that straddle both administration, project management and even human resource management.

“The requirements go beyond coordination and include scheduling meetings and making travel arrangements for the executives and directors they are attached to. Technology and the internet have transformed the role of administrative professionals,” she said.

UPSKILLING FOR PROGRESS

Progression through the ranks can see junior administrative professionals going into specialised areas such as human resource, finance and marketing. With adequate working experience and educational qualifications, these professionals can even take on management positions as office or administration managers.

There are also others who apply their acquired knowledge of business and operations to eventually start their own businesses.

Critical to career development, though, is being adaptable to changes and continuously upgrading and improving yourself, said Josephine, who is currently reading a diploma in people management.

She lists time management as an essential skill to pick up for administrative professionals to do well in their roles. Besides that, both written and verbal communication skills are important as report and minutes writing are key aspects of the job.

Given the increasingly digital work environment, Josephine highlighted that administrative professionals need to embrace changes to take advantage of the benefits of technology.

“There are various software and mobile applications that enable us to effectively and efficiently manage our workload and improve productivity,” she said.

WORKING WITH THE LABOUR MOVEMENT

“While we do have training programmes for our members, we also tap on partners like NTUC U

Associate because of the wide range of training and development courses available through its networks,” said Josephine.

The association also organises regular networking events where members can come together to share their views to better understand the work landscape and how to improve.

SAAP is supporting NTUC’s new PIVOT programme (*see page 8 for story*). Josephine and a fellow SAAP management council member have come forward to volunteer their time as mentors.

“It is our call of duty to lend a helping hand by way of emotional support and sharing of adequate skills advice to individuals keen on exploring new career opportunities in the administrative profession,” she said.

Josephine revealed that SAAP is looking into an Administrative Professional Development Programme for the administrative profession.

“With feedback from our members, focus groups and employers, we plan to introduce the programme with bite-sized modules that will be developed with partners like NTUC U Associate.

“Not limited to administrative professionals, the programme will also enable those interested in joining the profession to have a better idea of what is involved,” she shared.

INSIDER'S GUIDE

Singapore Association of Administrative Professionals (SAAP)

Established: 1971

Why: To support the development and enhance the status of administrative professionals in Singapore.

Became an NTUC U Associate in: February 2016

Did You Know: A non-profit organisation run by volunteers, SAAP was formerly known as the Singapore Association of Personal & Executive Secretaries. The association’s name was changed in 2005 to reflect the changing role of secretaries over the years with increased responsibility and authority in key areas of administrative management.

i For more information, visit www.saap.org.sg.

PIVOT: Help Through Displacement

In a changing landscape where job displacement is a given, the recently launched PIVOT programme aims to bring professionals, managers, executives and technicians together to help each other transition into new jobs.

By **Avelyn Ng**

The PIVOT programme, described as a holistic range of targeted industry-based assistance for professionals in-between jobs, was launched on 13 March 2017. Spearheaded by NTUC U Associate, the programme will identify and reach out to suitable candidates through the U PME Centre and NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute).

A key component of the programme will see volunteers from the participating U Associates offer a personal touch as career mentors. As practicing industry professionals, they will be able to share their insights and connections with PIVOT participants looking to transit into new jobs or industries.

For them to better build a rapport with programme participants, the volunteers were trained by the Singapore Psychological Society, a U Associate, to better interact and communicate empathetically.

Besides career support, some 24 U Associates on board the programme will also host a range

of industry talks, technical training sessions and networking platforms.

MAKING A CONNECTION

NTUC Assistant Director-General Vivek Kumar explained: "Feeling displaced is not easy. We want to ensure that the Labour Movement and people who are part of the Labour Movement are there with these professionals, managers and executives when they are going through the displacement.

"We are not so focused on finding a job. There are a number of other programmes where we are able to help people find jobs, connect through career fairs, and so on. Of course, in the process, we will also help you connect to the right job opportunities, but primarily, it is to offer that emotional support."

THE RIGHT MATCH

NTUC is still encouraging more U Associates to join and expand PIVOT's coverage to beyond the current 16 industries.

In a closed-door dialogue with the U Associate leaders held prior to the launch, NTUC Secretary-General (SG) Chan Chun Sing suggested that trade associations and chambers can initiate programmes to strengthen the capabilities of our small-and-medium-sized enterprises. This is akin to having an EnterpriseFuture Programme for our businesses, just as we have the SkillsFuture Programme for our workers.

Beyond helping professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs), he said that leveraging each other's competencies is also key towards a strong economy.

SG Chan highlighted that the problem with Singapore's unemployment lies not in the number of jobs, but in reskilling and matching displaced workers to the right jobs. PIVOT is an example of how the Labour Movement is addressing such issues on the ground.

"We want to build capabilities so that we can help our workers," said SG Chan.

Sharing First-hand Experiences

Volunteer mentor **Dr Deepak Waikar** is hoping that his experience can support others through challenges in their career journeys.

Story and Photo by **Jonathan Tan**



"From experience, I can say that there will be ups and downs in your career. Sometimes you will grow, sometimes you will take a hit. But learn from there, and then come back," shared Dr Deepak Waikar, a PIVOT volunteer from The Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (USA), Singapore Section.

"I do know that the energy sector here is going through some really tough times, and this is where I may be able to share with PIVOT participants what I have gained through my experience and training," said the industry veteran with over 25 years of experience in

FIND YOUR PIVOT

Facing challenges in your career transition? Here's how NTUC's new PIVOT programme can help you overcome the hurdles.

By **Jonathan Tan**

GETTING IN TOUCH

There are a number of ways in which working Singaporeans can get in touch with the Labour Movement for career support. NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) has two career services centres at e2i (west) and e2i (central). There's also the U PME Centre at NTUC Centre where professionals, managers and executives (PMEs) can get help specific to their needs. Additionally, there are a wide range of online resources at e2i and NTUC U PME's websites (see *Good To Know* box for more details).

THE PIVOT JOURNEY

Understandably, PMEs in the midst of a career transition can sometimes use a bit of support from peers who are practicing professionals. This may come by way of emotional support and guidance on reskilling and networking opportunities.

ASSESSMENT / CAREER COACHING

To better understand your needs, aspirations, skills and experience, a job profiling assessment will first be conducted with career coaches at any one of the Labour Movement's career service centres.

INDUSTRY TALKS

To enable you to make a more informed career choice, NTUC's U Associates will organise regular industry talks to share information on developing trends and fresh opportunities in the respective industries.

For a start, there will be upcoming talks on Administration, Cybersports, Information Technology, Internet Security, Real Estate and Supply Chain. These are being organised throughout the month of April. More details on the schedule and registration can be found on ntuc.co/findmypivot.

PEER-TO-PEER SUPPORT

A volunteer from one of the 24 participating U Associates spanning 16 industries will be matched to you. Besides emotional support and career guidance, this volunteer will share experiences, insights and offer that personal touch that can see you through your transition.

CAREER PREPARATION AND TECHNICAL TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Through the interactions with the career coaches and volunteers, you will get to know about courses and workshops that can help boost your job search. These programmes may range from technical skills courses to workshops teaching soft skills and will be conducted by partners in the Labour Movement network.

PLACEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

To realise your personal career transition, you will get access to job placement opportunities through the Labour Movement network. This could be in the form of job fairs or referrals.

GOOD TO KNOW

16 Industries and Counting

Here's a list of the 16 industries currently represented under the PIVOT Programme:

- Accountancy
- Administration
- Cybersports
- Engineering
- Building, Facilities and Environment
- Banking and Finance
- Healthcare
- Human Resource
- Information Technology
- Internet Security
- Project Management
- Real Estate
- Workplace Safety and Health
- Sales
- Supply Chain
- Sustainable Energy

training and consulting in the power and energy engineering sector.

Having worked and studied in India, Canada and Singapore, Dr Deepak also underwent a course organised by the Singapore Psychological Society, an NTUC U Associate, to learn more about the specifics of counselling.

He hopes to be able to help participants overcome psychological barriers that might be limiting them and believes that PIVOT will be very useful in helping people who may not have a network.

GOOD TO KNOW

CAREER SUPPORT RESOURCES:

U PME CENTRE

NTUC Centre, One Marina Boulevard, Level 9, Room 902
Website: www.ntuc.org.sg/wps/portal/pme/home
Tel: **6213 8008**

E2I (WEST)

Devan Nair Institute for Employment and Employability
80 Jurong East St 21, Level 2

E2I (CENTRAL)

HDB Hub Bizthree, 490 Lorong 6 Toa Payoh, #07-11
Website: e2i.com.sg
Tel: **6474 0606**

PIVOT MICROSITE: NTUC.CO/FINDMYPIVOT

Budget 2017: Committee of Supply

Here are more highlights from the Committee of Supply debates in Parliament which ended on 9 March 2017, with Labour Members of Parliament (MPs) raising a variety of issues.

By **Shukry Rashid** and **Ramesh Subbaraman**



Ministry of Law

MORE FOR IN-HOUSE COUNSEL

Speaking during the Ministry of Law's (MinLaw) Committee of Supply (COS) Debate on 3 March 2017, Senior Minister of State for Law Indranee Rajah said that the ministry noted and agreed with NTUC Assistant Secretary-General and Labour MP Patrick Tay's suggestion that Singapore should develop the talent pool of in-house counsel. An in-house counsel is a lawyer employed by a corporation.

Mr Tay, who is also a member and part of the advisory board of the Singapore Corporate Counsel Association (SCCA), said that SCCA's Competency Framework needs to be made mandatory at some point in time if the Government is serious about developing the talent pool of in-house counsel in Singapore. SCCA is an NTUC U Associate partner.

Singapore is currently one of the few countries in which in-house counsel are not required to meet any form of professional standards.

The Competency Framework by SCCA will be supported by the Labour Movement as a national standard for the in-house counsel industry this year.

SMALL CLAIMS TRIBUNAL

Ms Indranee said that the issue of increasing the Small Claims Tribunal's (SCT), jurisdiction is currently under review by MinLaw and the State Courts.

This came after Mr Tay urged the Ministry to "seriously look into reviewing the jurisdictional limits of the Small Claims Tribunal" as more people can have inexpensive and faster orders to their contractual claims.

He especially voiced his concerns for professional freelancers who are on contract for

service and have to resort to the SCT when they are not paid for their rendered work.

PROTECTION FROM HARASSMENT ACT

Mr Tay also asked MinLaw for an update on the Protection from Harassment Act.

In response, Ms Indranee said that as of 31 January 2017, some 268 applications for Protection Orders had been filed since the Act took effect on 15 November 2014. These included applications by victims of sexual, workplace and online harassment.

Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)

SGSECURE

Home Affairs Minister K Shanmugam said the Government will push ahead with its efforts on SGSecure, a national movement on how Singaporeans should respond in the event of a terrorist attack.

He added that security agencies will partner the Ministry of Manpower, NTUC and the Singapore Business Federation to engage businesses and unions in this effort.

Labour MP Patrick Tay had urged MHA to recruit ambassadors who can help spread the SGSecure message and be trained in skills to respond in the event of a terrorist attack.

GRADING OF SECURITY AGENCIES

The grading of security agencies in the private security industry was raised by NTUC Assistant Secretary-General and Labour MP Zainal Sapari. He is also the executive secretary of the Union of Security Employees (USE).

He called for MHA to ensure greater transparency of standards in the Police Licensing and Regulatory Department's (PLRD)

Security Agencies Grading Exercise (SAGE). Mr Zainal said that the lack of specific knowledge on assessment criteria and its benchmark had caused great worry to the private security agencies.

He also asked if the PLRD can review the timelines in between grading exercises. As the current assessment period conducted by PLRD and MOM is from June to May in the following year, the security agencies are in perpetual grading mode as deployment sites will be randomly selected for assessment anytime within this period.

Mr Zainal said that USE is concerned that SAGE is inconsistent in its ratings based on examples shared by unionised private security agencies. Some agencies risk losing their right to secure a site because their grading slipped a notch and security officers will either have to change employers to stay on the same site or have to relocate to another site. He hoped that MHA and PLRD would review this as well.

Senior Minister of State (Home Affairs) Desmond Lee said that in working on the Industry Transformation Map for the security sector, MHA will take the comments and suggestions into account.

Ministry of Finance

PROCUREMENT POLICIES

Speaking during the Finance Ministry's COS debate, Mr Zainal called on the Government to take the lead to set the benchmark for good procurement practices for the private sector to follow.

This will set the stage for better service provider-service buyer relationship that will ultimately benefit workers.

Second Minister for Finance Lawrence Wong



Labour Market Report 2016 and 2017 Outlook

The labour demand in Singapore will remain modest in 2017, in line with the Ministry of Trade and Industry's forecast of economic growth of 1 to 3 per cent.

By **Ramesh Subbaraman**

Releasing its report on Labour Market Developments for 2016 and the outlook for this year, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) said that hiring is expected to remain cautious in the manufacturing sector, as the marine and offshore engineering segment is likely to continue to face headwinds.

However, domestically-oriented services sectors such as community, social and personal services should continue to support employment growth.

Over the next three to five years, total workforce growth numbers (excluding foreign domestic workers) is expected to be in the range of 25,000 to 40,000.

LABOUR MARKET IN 2016

For 2016, the annual average resident unemployment rate rose slightly to 3 per cent from 2.8 per cent in 2015. This is the highest since 2010.

The increase was broad-based across most age and education groups, with larger increases among those aged 30 to 39 and 50 and above. Those with secondary and degree qualifications were also not spared.

Meanwhile, local employment grew by 11,200 in 2016, rebounding from flat growth of 700 in 2015.

Redundancies rose to 19,170 last year, due mainly to business restructuring and reorganisation.

LABOUR MOVEMENT'S CONCERNS

Responding to the report on his Facebook page, NTUC Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) and Director of the Future Jobs, Skills and Training (FJST) department Patrick Tay expressed concern that more mature professionals, managers and executives (PMEs) were being affected by the softening of the labour market.

Mr Tay was heartened by the announcements in Parliament last week by the Manpower Ministry during the Committee of Supply debate to help jobseekers.

"I hope the new Attach-and-Train initiative will also help jobseekers reskill for jobs in growth sectors in spite of weaker hiring due to economic uncertainty," he said.

ASG Tay added that the Labour Movement has also just launched the PIVOT programme to help affected or vulnerable PMEs in terms of peer support.

said: "Wherever possible, government agencies will take into consideration the HR and tripartism records of tendering companies. In particular, we focus on the sectors that are more at risk of cheap-sourcing and suppressed wages, like the cleaning, security and landscape sectors. For example, the Government buys only from accredited service providers that adopt the Progressive Wage Model for cleaners."

Ministry of Health (MOH)

FUTURE-READY HEALTHCARE SECTOR

In the next three years, Singapore will require about 9,000 staff for new facilities and services in the public healthcare and community care sectors. Half of these roles will be for professionals, managers, executives and technicians (PMETs). Speaking during the Health Ministry's COS debate, Senior Minister of State (Health) Dr Amy Khor announced that MOH will invest an additional \$24 million over the next three years in various manpower development schemes.

Labour Nominated MP and President of the Healthcare Services Employees' Union K Thanalethimi urged MOH and employers to work with the Labour Movement's Future Jobs, Skills and Training department to identify emerging opportunities and determine the necessary expertise and training workers will need to join the healthcare industry.

Mr Tay also urged MOH to work with Workforce Singapore and NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) to come up with new Professional Conversion Programmes (PCPs) in the healthcare sector.

Since 2003, about 800 midcareer professionals have undergone conversion training to become nurses under the PCP for nursing.

"We will make further enhancements to the PCPs for nursing. MOH will increase funding for nursing PCP training so that employers co-fund only 10 per cent of the training cost, down from 20 to 50 per cent currently," said Dr Khor.

MOH is also collaborating with SkillsFuture Singapore to develop a Skills Framework, targeted for launch at the end of 2018, for the entire healthcare sector to support healthcare professionals in their career and clinical development.



Quek and Quek Managing Director Quek Hong Peng (far right) believes in creating a home away from home for his foreign employees.



Built on Founding Principles

We salute Quek and Quek Civil Engineering for having a heart for their foreign employees by creating a homely place for them to come back to each night after a hard day's work.

Story and Photos by **Fawwaz Baktee**

Imagine you are a foreign worker in Singapore. What would you like to go back to after a long, hard day at work from some construction site?

A clean room and fresh clothes? Not all are that lucky but the foreign employees with Quek and Quek Civil Engineering have it nice, all because their employer cares. The company fully supports the Government's factory-converted dormitory (FCD) policies.

"Our employees, no matter foreign or Singaporean, must be treated well and the same. That is what I believed in when I founded the company. And it shows when we implement these initiatives ahead of the policies. They make workers happier. Happier workers are more productive," said the company's Managing Director Quek Hong Peng.

There are workers specially hired to upkeep the cleanliness of dormitories and to do the laundry for every migrant worker housed in the company's FCD.

"This is for the well-being of our workers. When they come back from work, they are already tired and the last thing they want to

think about is cleaning their rooms or doing their laundry. We want our workers to rest as much as they can because the work they do is really tough," said Quek and Quek Operations Manager Andrew Tan.

Since the company built the FCD in 2009, every migrant worker has been given a locker, said the company's General Manager Wong Bee Chin.

"They need a proper place to keep their personal belongings and valuable items. Unlike many places, because we gave the lockers since we started to operate the dorm, there hasn't been a case of theft or anything like that happening," she said.

EARLY ADOPTERS

Quek and Quek was also an early adopter in providing a sick bay and wi-fi for workers, implementing these initiatives last year, ahead of the January 2017 mandatory conditions for FCD operators.

Mdm Wong said: "We thought since we already use the wi-fi for the CCTV system, why don't we just open it up for the workers as well?"

Mr Tan added that it is only fair that workers

be allowed to contact their families overseas.

"Many of our workers want to keep in touch with loved ones back home. The company tries to facilitate this for all of them. Especially in emergencies, allowing them such access would be a benefit," he said.

FEEDBACK FROM EMPLOYEE

Shafiqul Islam, who has been working in the company for the last 16 years, said that the best part about the dorm is the central kitchen where workers can cook up meals that remind them of home.

"I came from a different company before this one. In total, I have been in Singapore for the last 21 years. Unlike my previous employer, my boss now provides us with everything. Everything is here.

"You want to cook, you go down to the kitchen. You want to exercise, you go to the gym. You want to read, we have reading corner. I think my employer takes care of us very well. This dorm is good. It's like a house and we are like a family," said the 46-year-old from Bangladesh.



Recognition Deserved - Dormitory Awards for Factory-Converted Dormitories

For going beyond regulatory requirements to cater to the housing needs of their residents, Quek and Quek Civil Engineering was one of the 11 companies awarded the Dormitory Award for Factory-Converted Dormitories.

The inaugural Dormitory Awards Dinner last month was organised by the Manpower Ministry, with the support of the Migrant

Workers' Centre.

"The award definitely gives us a form of encouragement, but I believe that even if we didn't win we would continue taking care of the welfare of our workers.

"It puts our minds at ease to know that our workers are safe and comfortable at the end of the day," said Quek and Quek Operations Manager Andrew Tan.

Congratulations to the other Winners

1. Active Fire Protection Systems Pte Ltd
2. Anderco Pte Ltd
3. Hai Leck Holdings
4. Jackly Engineering Pte Ltd
5. Kwan Yong Construction Pte Ltd
6. Straits Construction Singapore Pte Ltd
7. Super Galvanising Pte Ltd
8. Tong Shing Contractors Pte Ltd
9. UTOC Engineering Pte Ltd
10. Utracon Corporation Pte Ltd

Living Spaces

Nothing can replace the comfort of home, the smell of food cooking in the family kitchen and the heart-warming sounds of everyday familiar voices.

We thank the operators of foreign workers' accommodation in Singapore who try and make these moments less painful for workers away from home. We bring you the top three winning entries of a photo competition recently organised by the Ministry of Manpower where migrant workers showcase their favourite spots within their living areas.

1ST PLACE - RUBEL

**SUPER GALVANISING PTE LTD -
1A PIONEER SECTOR WALK, S 627895**

“Our dormitory has a very good environment. Every day, our dormitory is cleaned. The room environment is very good. Air cooler and ceiling fans are also present in the room. There is good arrangement for namaz (prayers). There are no bugs or cockroaches present in the room. There is also good dining amenity. We enjoy this very good environment. There is a sense of being at home even though we are away.”

(Translated from Bengali)



2ND PLACE - MYO MIN OO

**FACILITY LINK PRIVATE LIMITED -
BLOCK 4 SUNGEI KADUT CRESCENT, S 728688**

“This is a nice place. I've stayed here for a very long time, 15 to 16 years. There is a smoking area where we talk, relax and smoke. It is also the place where we talk on the phone at night as people are sleeping. There is the eating area where we have dinner every day.

Our sleeping area is where we sleep every night, as well as pray because we are Buddhist. On Sundays, our off-days, we go to City Hall (Peninsular Plaza). It is a distance for us to walk to the MRT station. Therefore, we cycle there and park it at the station.”



3RD PLACE - ALI HASSAN

**FUTAR ENTERPRISES PTE LTD -
NO.19 CHANGI NORTHWAY, S 498786**

“Happy to stay here and take our meals together. It has everything that we need, freezer provided, allow us to keep food for long time, no need to keep going out to buy food. Stay here good because our own company people, like family. Therefore, no theft or loss. Work here, live here. When I sick, friend see me many times. Boss also very good and understanding, allow us to rest whenever.”



What's Happening Where

Compiled by **Shukry Rashid**

May Day 2017: The Resilience of Diamonds

Are you ready? That time of the year is drawing close and the Labour Movement is shining with a fresh new design to colour this year's May Day and the many collaterals that will come with it!

This year, we go all glitter with an everlasting and strong message. The diamond heart represents the Unusual Labour Movement's solid resolve and perseverance in future-proofing workers today to overcome challenges and seize tomorrow's opportunities. Just as how precious diamonds can withstand immense pressure and hard knocks, NTUC wants all working people to be resilient and strong, to be able to attain better skills, jobs and lives for them and their families.

Facets of the diamond heart reflect the NTUC's growing network and its expanding range of services as we Care for our working people, ensure Fair workplace practices for them and Grow with them – the enduring mission of the Unusual Labour Movement.



Fairy Tale Wedding Show

Dreaming of that fairy tale wedding to celebrate one of the biggest occasions in your life but not sure where to start? Then head down to Orchid Country Club's (OCC) Fairy Tale Wedding Show and be amazed by their showcase. Draw inspiration from the fashion show by Yvonne Creative Bridal and sip on high-tea treats while you find out more about OCC's wedding banquet packages with exclusive offers. Also, stand a chance to win attractive lucky draw prizes such as a wedding gown and discounts on the wedding banquet!

i 2 Apr 2017, 1–6pm, Orchid Country Club, Grand Ballroom. Free admission. To RSVP, call **6750 2166** or email **s&m@orchidclub.com**.



Financial Industry Career Advisory Centre

If you are keen to venture into the financial sector or are just looking to move to a new job within the industry, the Financial Industry Career Advisory Centre will provide ample guidance for you to take that step. The Association of Banks in Singapore and U PME Centre also regularly organise talks on various roles within the financial sector. In the upcoming one, it will be on compliance.

i 5 Apr 2016, 6–9pm, NTUC Centre, One Marina Boulevard, Room 801. For enquiries or registration, visit the events page on **www.ntuc.org.sg/pme**.

50plus 2017 Expo

Organised by Council for Third Age in partnership with U Live, 50plus 2017 is the largest and most comprehensive event for baby boomers and seniors. If you want to learn actively and live happily, this event is for you! Here's what you can expect and do – participate in educational forums, learn new skills at various classes, pick up courses at the bazaar to further your active ageing and lifelong learning journey or gain insights on ageing issues at the conference.

i 24–26 Mar 2017, 10am–9pm, Suntec City Singapore Convention and Exhibition Centre, Level 3. Free admission, registration will be open onsite during the event. For enquiries, email **events@ulive.com.sg** or call **6582 3605**.



Snapshots

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

Compiled by **NTUC This Week team**



Welcoming New U Associates

NTUC U Associate signed memoranda of understanding with seven new partners on 13 March 2017, bringing the total number to 58 U Associates across 23 industries.

The new U Associates include: Singapore FinTech Association; Association of Crypto-Currency Enterprises and Start-Ups Singapore; Institute of Parks and Recreation Singapore; Internet Society; Nanyang Technological University School of Electrical and Electronic Engineering Alumni Association; Singapore Institute of Aerospace Engineers; and TechSociety Group.

i Find out how you can benefit from the U Associate at www.ntuc.org.sg/uassociate.

PropNex Convention: Embracing Technology

Speaking as guest-of-honour at the recent PropNex Convention on 14 March 2017, NTUC Secretary-General (SG) Chan Chun Sing addressed some of the concerns shared by the 3,000 real estate agents in attendance.

SG Chan said that while technology can lead to job losses, it can also enhance existing ones and offer new opportunities. Mastering technology will enable agents to maintain their competitiveness.

Another way agents under the PropNex brand can succeed amidst these changes is to build up a reputation of trust, said SG Chan. To be a trusted professional, one should possess ethics, knowledge, skills and standards. He also suggested that as practicing industry professionals, they are better placed to set the standards that will professionalise the industry.

More Help to Get Jobs

In light of the job mismatches surfaced in Parliament debates recently, NTUC Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) Heng Chee How went on Channel 8's *Hello Singapore* on 14 March 2017 to discuss the pressing challenges facing professionals, managers, executives and technicians who are out of work.

By enhancing the Professional Conversion Programmes (PCPs) and Career Support Programme, the Government hopes to reduce long-term unemployment of over six months.

The measures will encourage employers to hire by minimising their wage burden during the initial months and provide active jobseekers financial support so that they can manage household expenses while reskilling.

The talk show also shined the spotlight on the Place and Train PCPs, which allow mid-career switchers to take up subsidised courses while starting work in their new companies.

DSG Heng explained that this increases the chances of job confirmation after probation as it gives the employee time to adjust and learn, and the company the ability to assess their attitude.

**WE ARE COMMITTED TO
HOLD OUR BEVERAGE PRICES
DESPITE THE IMPENDING
INCREASE IN WATER TARIFF.**

Christine Lim

By **Ramesh Subbaraman**



**Singapore Insurance
Employees' Union (SIEU)**

Date of Registration: 31 October 1955

Date of Affiliation to NTUC: March 1972

Membership: 9,000 members

Did You Know: In September 1955 a group of insurance employees approached the Singapore Trade Union Congress (STUC) to seek advice on forming a union for insurance workers. A protest committee was formed on 15 October 1955 and the Singapore Insurance Companies Employees' Union (SICEU) was legally registered on 31 October 1955. SICEU later became SIEU in 1978.

You have probably heard the term “fintech” quite often. But what about “insurtech”?

It refers to the insurance industry bracing the wave of technological changes, something the newly-elected President of the Singapore Insurance Employees' Union (SIEU) Christine Lim and her team are preparing their members for.

The 45-year-old union leader who was elected to the SIEU post in January this year is also concerned about the need to better represent the industry's professionals, managers and executives (PMEs).

NTUC This Week: Tell us about your union journey in SIEU.

Christine Lim: I was more of an accidental president. We were grooming and preparing someone else over the years but suddenly she decided not to continue when election time came in January this year. I saw it as an opportunity to serve and so I stepped forward after discussing with some of the team members in SIEU. I have been serving as a branch chair and exco member since the early 2000s. From 2012 to 2016, I was the second assistant treasurer.

The insurance industry is changing. How is SIEU and its members dealing with that?

With new entrants like insurtech companies, changes come fast and furious. Mergers and acquisitions will continue. The new technology wave will replace many jobs or see them offshored. The challenge for us as a union is to embrace this and help our members transit. Not everyone may make it but we want to help as many as possible and for those who have issues, we will try our best to mitigate the

pain. But we cannot do all these without the legitimacy to represent. This brings me to the internal challenges. We need to move the scope of our collective agreements upwards to cover professionals, managers and executives (PMEs).

What about lifelong learning and training as a way of life to cope with changes?

We have a de facto training institute called the Singapore College of Insurance. Specific insurance development courses are offered through or by them. We have also linked companies with NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) to work on training programmes to help improve the overall standing of the industry. In doing so, we also hope to improve our image, that we are not just made up of sales agents or advisers.

What are some of the common concerns and grievances that members raise with you?

There isn't a most common one but increasingly with a more diverse workforce, people get curious over how they are paid. Is it at a fair rate? Where pay increases and bonuses are tied to, how is my performance being appraised? Is it a fair deal? And without legitimacy to represent them, the limited scope for PME's today doesn't allow us to speak collectively on these issues.

What is your message to all your union members in this fast changing job environment?

To all SIEU union members, I would say, the union is only as effective as our collective participation. Step up and step forward and together, we can make a greater difference.



NTUC THIS WEEK

MANAGING EDITOR

SHONA TAN-JAMES shonatan@ntuc.org.sg

ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR

GOY KAE LIP kaelip@ntuc.org.sg

EDITOR

NICOLETTE YEO nicollette_yeo@ntuc.org.sg

SUB EDITOR

GURMEET SINGH gurmeet_singh@ntuc.org.sg

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

RAMESH SUBBARAMAN rameshr@ntuc.org.sg

EDITORIAL CONSULTANT

LIM LI YIN liyin@ntuc.org.sg

SENIOR JOURNALIST/NEW MEDIA MANAGER

JONATHAN TAN jonathan_tan@ntuc.org.sg

SENIOR JOURNALIST

FAWWAZ BAKTEE fawwazf@ntuc.org.sg

AVELYN NG avelyn_ng@ntuc.org.sg

JOURNALIST

SHUKRY RASHID shukryr@ntuc.org.sg

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

DANIEL GOH daniel_goh@ntuc.org.sg

SENIOR DESIGNER

MOHAMED NASUHAN SOEYOETI nasuhan@ntuc.org.sg

DESIGNERS

TAY EE WEE eewee.tay@ntuc.org.sg

IVAN TIMOTHY PRASETYA ivan_prasetya@ntuc.org.sg

HEAD, SALES & MARKETING

CHRIS SENG chris_seng@ntuc.org.sg

SUBSCRIPTION/ADVERTISING

JENNY LIAU jenny_liau@ntuc.org.sg

PHONE 6213 8531

PUBLISHER

MAJORITY MEDIA PTE LTD

ADDRESS 73 Bras Basah Road, NTUC Trade Union House

#06-01 Singapore 189556

PHONE +65 6213 8531 FAX +65 6327 3749

EMAIL LMNewsroom@ntuc.org.sg

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