



Deputy Prime Minister Teo Chee Hean with Custodian Cadet Ahmad Muzakir and Dr Ahmad Magad, Chairman of Pasir Ris-Punggol Town Council & Members of Parliament, Messrs Charles Chong & Michael Palmer at the Pasir-Ris Punggol TC Tree Planting Day (15 November 2009)



Associate Professor Ho Peng Kee, Senior Minister State for Home Affairs and Law with the inaugural batch of Building Custodians, Mdm Cynthia Phua, Chairperson Aljunied Town Council, and WDA, NTUC and RECC officers (14 August 2007)

## Training to help workers get out of poverty trap: NTUC

But make lifelong learning cheaper and more accessible, say MPs

By KEITH LIM

THE labour movement aims to use a recently-launched national manpower plan for adult training to get low-wage and contract workers out of the poverty trap, Nominated MP Chen Han Fong said yesterday.

A 10-year strategy to give workers high-quality training leading up to national qualifications - and better job prospects - was announced this month by Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong.

Some measures rolled out under Continuing Education and Training Masterplan will benefit contract workers, in particular, noted Mr Chan, who is director of industrial relations at the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC).

She believes, for instance, that the skills development levy reduction from 1 per cent of gross monthly salary to 0.25 per cent will encourage contract service providers to send their workers for skills upgrading.

The NTUC also helped some 6,000 contract workers come under the CPF system last year. By doing so, they qualify for Workfare Income Supplement (WIS) payouts. These are currently about 172,000 casual and contract workers.

Mr Chan said the goal must be to train such workers off the scheme. "Low-wage workers cannot always be low-wage workers."

help these workers as they can get out of the poverty trap and move on. Our intent must be for them to get out of WIS eventually."

MPs like Mr Zainuddin Nor din (Shaban-Tan Payoh GRC) yesterday also praised the Government for using continuous training and re-training programmes to help "at-risk workers such as cleaners, labourers and machine operators."

However Mr Zainuddin, who is Mayor of Central Singapore District, said many such workers lived a hand-to-mouth existence, and were reluctant to go for training as it did not make economic sense to them.

This is because going for training meant that they would not be earning for the duration of the course.

He hoped the Government would consider introducing measures such as portable training benefits, or allow bonuses to apply for absentee payoffs - to cover a percentage of a worker's salary when he is on training and so minimise the impact on his bottom-line.

Making lifelong learning cheaper and more accessible for workers was also on the mind of Mr Tan Joo Poo.

The MP for Bukit Panjang and Mayor of North West District suggested that schools and tertiary institutions be given grants as an incentive to conduct adult learning programmes.

Beyond getting workers' skills and industry requirements, there is the device used to bolster their confidence and self-esteem when taking on new jobs, said Minister of State (Health) Hong Chee Hwa.

"Technical training of the workers is necessary, but not sufficient," said the NTUC deputy secretary-general and Jan Benar GRC MP.

"Getting that spirit up to say that 'I can move on, I can adapt', that's extremely important as well."

MR MOHAMED BALI KARTO, 53, The ex-cleaner was cited by MP Han Chee Hwa as a model worker who picked up the coverage to get his training. Once earning \$750 a month, he now makes \$1,000 a month doing building maintenance work for Suncorp Environmental Management.



HAPPIER AND MORE CONFIDENT

"At first, I was scared to go for training, as I can't speak nor read English and was worried that my classmates will laugh at me. But my employer and trainers were very patient with me, and encouraged me to give it a try. Now, I'm a much happier and more confident person. I know I can do the job, as long as I give myself a chance."

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# 实用的培训课程

王松涛

当公司派我报名参加就业与职业技能培训中心(e2i)之“房地产与建筑中心”(Real Estate and Construction Centre)专业维修保养课程时,我心中顿感茫然若失,难道这头苦干实干的“老牛”,俯首甘作了半辈子,仍不能“驾轻就熟”胜任愉快吗?但转念一想,既然“活到老学到老”且“学以致用”,偶有机缘提升自己,还是别抱怨吧!

同窗的却是年轻的“生力军”,济济一堂,兴致盎然,不懈努力,互相分享学习“成果”、“心得”之效益。

意料不到的是讲师们都非常严格督导,激发我们的责任感,坚定我们对事业的理想信念,不厌其烦地亲自带我们到邻里的组屋工地的示范,是课堂理论学习和实地实践双管齐下,找出哪儿有破洞就往哪里堵,哪里有裂痕就往哪里补,干净利落;但却能确保建筑长期保持稳如泰山,干净宜居。

令人印象深刻的是保养维修“公厕”的烦杂工作,经验丰富的“讲师”一言道破了其“玄机”。维修工作就得兼容并包,像樟

宜国际机场内的“公厕”,如厕如入“芝兰之室”的称奇美誉,非有敬业的专业者严密管理,怎能长期维持美誉?

我们也十分赞赏监督有方的女讲师柯博士,她早年继承了其父的建筑企业之夙愿,在讲台上她语重心长地把一生积淀的工作经验解析出来,深深地激励了我们策划创业的动机。柯博士十分关怀我们在工地上操作的安危,一再详尽地教导我们如何运用自己的智慧,周详安排工作的程序,叮嘱我们对任何危险事故千万别存着侥幸心理,尽可能有效地预防、避免或减少危险的发生。

古人有“十年磨一剑”,短短三个星期的培训课程,其实是讲师聚集多年经验的“牛刀小试”,是多方学员的经验交流,并通过培训与实践的管道求取现代建筑业的新科技,与时俱进地提高工作效率,三周课程胜读十年书。

我们不少学员在上完课后,都有了在未来创业的憧憬,对于建筑保养与维修这千秋不朽的事业,我们都有美好的愿望。