

Striving Towards Sustainability

In the face of a changing business landscape, it is important that companies take the right step forward in the stride towards achieving a sustainable business, one that thrives on productivity and ultimately benefits Singapore as a nation.

At the Singapore Tripartism Forum's Luncheon Dialogue with Chief Executive Officers (CEOs) on 24 September 2012, some 147 participants from 87 companies engaged with a panel of STF leaders that included Acting Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin, NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say and Singapore National Employers Federation President Stephen Lee. The panel was chaired by NTUC President Diana Chia.

The dialogue is organised in particular for new CEOs who have been appointed over the last 12 months and senior management to learn more on the work of tripartite partners as well as various tripartite initiatives. Themed 'Tripartism for an Inclusive Workforce', the platform provided a vibrant exchange of ideas on a workforce which has seen a rising number of PMEs (Professionals, Managers and Executives) and mature workers.

STF leaders shared insights with business leaders on various key issues on what the way forward would be for Singapore to continue to thrive. A strong focus was placed on strengthening the Singaporean Core and achieving higher productivity with a better skilled workforce, so that workers of all levels can reap the fruits of improved productivity by also attaining higher wages.

The forum also displayed the strength of Singapore's Tripartism. Said Mr Tan: "Tripartism is one of those very rare partnerships that has evolved over time...I think it has allowed us both at the Government and national level, and at the business and union level, for the workers to actually benefit in very strong ways. We need to strengthen and build on this."



From left: NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say, Singapore National Employers Federation President Stephen Lee, Acting Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin and NTUC President Diana Chia.

The Way Forward

“The tripartite partners believe that higher wages is the outcome we all hope to achieve. But (to sustain wage increases year after year), the way we achieve this is more important than the outcome. Let us continue to keep improving the jobs, productivity and skills so that we can have an all-win outcome for the workers, businesses and the economy as a whole. That really is the way to go.”

NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say

Productivity Is Key

“Productivity is really the key, and we need to continue to train our workers in the process. And I think when NTUC is fully committed to support employers in raising productivity, employers must be prepared to share the gains with workers.”

Singapore National Employers Federation President Stephen Lee

Opportunities For Businesses

“We are putting in a lot of resources in terms of training, so that we make sure the workforce can be trained, can be upskilled whatever the age and whatever the qualification to make sure that it's relevant. And secondly, to also provide incentives especially for SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises) to transform and to position themselves.

“Let's really make use of the opportunities we have and I think we can really re-position ourselves as a much more productive economy going forward and it will probably put us in a very competitive space to compete in the years to come as well.”

Acting Minister for Manpower Tan Chuan-Jin

Progressive Wage Is The Way To Go

The Labour Movement will now adopt a progressive wage strategy to level up salaries of low-wage workers through the Inclusive Growth Programme (IGP).

NTUC Secretary-General Lim Swee Say said this approach will be sustainable to aim for real wage increases for these workers. He said this strategy is set to first impact the group of 10,000 cleaners from four sectors - public cleansing, hawkker centres' cleaning, school cleaning and conservancy cleaning.

Elaborating on the all-win outcomes that this progressive wage system will achieve, SG Lim was addressing industry partners and union leaders at the Labour Movement's Cleaning Journey held at NTUC's e2i (Employment and Employability Institute) on 21 June 2012.

The Labour Movement's immediate target for cleaners' earning below \$1,000 is to work with industry partners to bring up their salaries to \$1,000. And for those who are already earning \$1,000, the next target set for them is to aim for \$1,200. When workers have reached the \$1,200 mark, the next mark will be \$1,500 and the progression goes on with these "wage milestones" up the progressive wage ladder, said SG Lim.

"Our philosophy is that every job can be improved in terms of skills, in terms of productivity, in terms of wages and in terms of career progression. Under the IGP, this progressive wage will be our core strategy to achieve this," he further explained.

This approach brushes aside debates on minimum wage implementations which he cited as "too slow and sticky." When the minimum wage is too low, it will affect workers as they may not be able to cope with the cost of living. When the minimum wage gets pushed up consistently, it may be rendered too high and some workers may be left unemployed.

Furthermore, revising the minimum wage will involve renegotiation and consultation. Pointing out these concerns, SG Lim highlighted that "under the progressive wage strategy, the process of bringing up wages is not through legislation, but rather through cooperation."

He added that "every job sector will define its own wage ladder" and that the essence of this process is helping workers take the step towards the next wage milestone and continue on climbing this progressive ladder. This process of crossing the wage milestones will involve concerted efforts such as skills upgrading and productivity enhancement.

Work-Life Excellence Award (WLEA) 2012

The Work-Life Excellence Award 2012 was given out to 45 employers and 2 leaders for their achievements in championing work-life harmony at a Gala Dinner on 12 October. The Award is organised biennially by the Tripartite Committee on Work-Life Strategy which comprises employer associations such as SNEF and Employer Alliance, NTUC and government agencies, and is chaired by Mr Hawazi Daipi, Senior Parliamentary Secretary for Manpower and Education.

The award-winners ranged from multinational corporations to organisations in the public sectors to Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) which demonstrated that size is no obstacle to fostering flexible and supportive work-life cultures. Apart from organisations such as Maybank

and the Housing Development Board (HDB), which have also won the award in previous years, there were also a number of new Award-winners, such as Avanade Asia and Network Express Courier Services. The participation of these companies in the Awards are a testament to a recognition of the importance and relevance of championing work-life strategies

Acting Minister for Manpower, Mr Tan Chuan-Jin, who was present as Guest-of-honour to give out the awards, called on employers to foster work-life cultures that enable employees to pursue their career and personal aspirations confidently and without guilt or repercussions. He also highlighted the need for management and supervisors to walk the talk and lead the change for positive work-life practices.

SNEF Structured Human Resource Internship Programme (SHIP)

10 September 2012 – 30 November 2012



The Singapore National Employers Federation (SNEF) together with Temasek Polytechnic (TP) organised the 4th Structured Human Resource Internship Programme (SHIP) for TP students majoring in Diplomas in Business and Psychology from 10 Sep to 30 Nov 2012.

The programme comprises a 2 week stint with SNEF and a 9-week industrial attachment at companies. During their internship at SNEF, the SHIP students had the opportunity to visit the Ministry of Manpower, the Industrial Arbitration Court, the National Trades Union Congress, the Work Safety Health Council, and the Tripartite Alliance for Fair Employment Practices. They also gained practical insights from the sharing of HR practices of the companies they visited.

We wish the SHIP interns success in their future endeavours.