

**MAY DAY MESSAGE 2008**  
**BY MR GAN KIM YONG, ACTING MINISTER FOR MANPOWER**

**NTUC – An Important Tripartite Partner**

1. In Singapore, May Day is a joyous occasion where we recognise and celebrate the contributions of workers and the labour movement to Singapore's economic and social progress. This is an extraordinary achievement – in other countries, demonstrations would likely be the order of the day.

2. The labour movement, spearheaded by the NTUC, has adopted a constructive approach by working in partnership with employers and the Government for the mutual benefit of workers and businesses. Our strong tripartite partnership is a key success factor that has contributed towards creating an attractive investment climate in Singapore and facilitated business and employment growth. The harmonious tripartite relationship has also enabled the social partners to work closely together to enhance Singapore's competitiveness and overcome challenges, particularly in times of adversity. Coupled with our sound economic policy and good infrastructure, this has laid a strong foundation for Singapore to achieve sustained economic growth and social progress.

3. Last year, the Singapore economy grew by 7.7%. All major sectors registered employment growth, achieving an all-time high of 234,900 jobs created. Overall unemployment rate dropped to 1.6% in December 2007, the lowest in a decade. Employees enjoyed good wage increases and higher bonuses as a result of strong business performance and tight labour market.

**Expanding Role of NTUC**

4. The success of many national initiatives would not have been possible without NTUC's active and effective advocacy of workers' interests at many tripartite platforms. Over the past year, NTUC has worked in concert with employers and Government and played a key role in wage recommendations, wage restructuring, assisting low wage workers, promoting re-employment of older workers, and the formulation of CPF LIFE. Your participation has helped to shape policies and measures that better meet the interests and needs of both businesses and workers.

5. NTUC has also been active in helping jobseekers and workers to continually upgrade and learn new skills to improve their employability. Your recent launch of the Employment and Employability Institute (e2i) in February 2008 will enhance our capability to reach out to jobseekers and workers, and provide the necessary training to enable them to take on new and better jobs.

6. At the company level, the unions' ability and willingness to work with employers to pre-empt and help workers resolve disputes have contributed to a significant decline in industrial disputes and strengthened industrial harmony. As a result, few disputes needed arbitration.

## **Meeting Future Challenges**

7. The trust and confidence among the tripartite partners should never be taken for granted. We need to imbue successive generations of tripartite leaders with the same sense of common purpose and values. The Singapore Tripartism Forum jointly set up by the tripartite partners serves as a good platform to continue to nurture this relationship. I am confident that with this strong partnership, we will be able to surmount any challenges that come our way.

8. I look forward to working with NTUC to build on the good work the labour movement has achieved. Together, we can create a Great Workforce and a Great Workplace.

9. Happy May Day!