



Transport Minister and Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure Khaw Boon Wan acknowledging a round of applause at the award ceremony yesterday. NTUC said in its citation for the Medal of Honour that Mr Khaw's belief in prioritising workers and his efforts in advancing tripartism have left an indelible mark on the lives of workers. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

NTUC's Medal of Honour awarded to Khaw Boon Wan

Minister lauded for improving the lives of workers and contributions to tripartism

Joanna Seow
Manpower Correspondent

Transport Minister Khaw Boon Wan has received the labour movement's Medal of Honour for his contributions to Singapore's workforce and tripartism.

Mr Khaw, who is also Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure, was presented with the award at the National Trades Union Congress May Day Awards ceremony yesterday.

NTUC president Mary Liew said in a speech at the event that Mr Khaw stood with healthcare workers during the severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars) crisis in 2003 when he was heading the Sars combat team in the Ministry of Health.

"You walked the talk, you held them together, and you fought their battle, and you uplifted their lives as well," she said of Mr Khaw.

He also promoted productivity so that Singapore workers can be "world class" and enjoy the gains from productivity improvements, she said.

NTUC, in its citation for the Medal

of Honour, the highest award to be given out by the labour movement this year, said that under Mr Khaw's leadership, centralised academies such as the Singapore Rail Academy and the Singapore Bus Academy were set up to train public transport workers.

To improve rail reliability, he started the "early closure, late opening" initiative to give rail engineers and technicians more time to safely complete repairs, maintenance and renewal work on MRT lines. He visits depots, interchanges and tunnels to understand workers' challenges and celebrate milestones.

With the advent of private-hire car services, the Ministry of Transport and the Land Transport Authority worked with the National Taxi Association and National Private Hire Vehicles Association to help drivers keep up with changes.

NTUC also highlighted Mr Khaw's role as chairman of the council of advisers of the Education Services Union since it was formed in 2006. He was vital in identifying the rapid growth in the private education industry, it said.

As People's Action Party chairman from 2011 to last year, he also "affirmed and nurtured" the longstanding symbiotic relationship between the party and NTUC.

It said his belief in prioritising workers and his efforts in advancing

tripartism have left an indelible mark on the lives of workers.

Past recipients of the Medal of Honour include Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong (1999) and Senior Ministers Teo Chee Hean (2014) and Tharman Shanmugaratnam (2017).

At yesterday's award event at the University Cultural Centre in Kent Ridge, NTUC recognised 117 unionists, workers, company leaders, public servants and organisations who have supported its initiatives and sought to improve workers' lives.

For the first time, it commended workers who exemplify what it calls Worker 4.0 – people who have improved their employability through skills training, adopted or initiated productivity improvements and adapted to changing work environments. Six workers received the inaugural Model Worker award.

NTUC also celebrated the contributions of the late veteran union leader Cyrille Tan, who died in 2017 at the age of 67. He was conferred the Distinguished Service (Star) Award posthumously.

Mr Tan was a retired NTUC vice-president who had also served as general secretary of the United Workers of Electronic and Electrical Industries for 22 years.

His son Jaimes Tan received the award on his behalf.

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MAKING A DIFFERENCE

I am blessed to have worked alongside people who work not for themselves, but for the larger good.

The NTUC and the unique Singapore way to the labour movement have allowed me to make a small difference to Singapore during the past 41 years.

Without the NTUC, my achievements would have been severely diminished.

I am grateful to receive the 2019 May Day Medal of Honour by NTUC. I receive it in great humility, and on behalf of all my former and current colleagues.



MR KHAW BOON WAN, Minister for Transport and Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure, in a Facebook post last night.

Management, workers are equals sharing a similar dream: Khaw

When veteran minister Khaw Boon Wan was approached about setting up a healthcare workers' union while he was running National University Hospital (NUH), it felt like "a slap in my face", he said.

He thought he was doing a good job as an enlightened leader, treating all colleagues as equals and solving problems together with them.

"I could not understand why the workers should feel such a need to organise themselves. They must have felt the working conditions in NUH were awful," said Mr Khaw, who was chief executive of the hospital from 1985 to 1987.

He researched the Singapore labour movement, talked to unionised companies and unionists and discussed the proposal – raised by former National Trades Union Congress president Diana Chia, a staff nurse at Singapore General Hospital at the time – with his colleagues.

Mr Khaw, 66, who is now Transport Minister and Coordinating Minister for Infrastructure, said he was soon convinced that the NTUC approach to the union movement was compatible with his personal approach to leadership – "they were both sides of the same coin".

His view is that workers and management are equals, "sharing a similar dream to build an organisation that lasts and that takes good care of its workers fairly".

Eventually, the National University Hospital Employees' Union was formed. It later merged with the Health Corporation of Singapore Staff Union to form the Healthcare Services Employees' Union.

Mr Khaw shared this story in an interview with NTUC website LabourBeat. It was published yesterday when he received NTUC's Medal of Honour, its highest May Day award this year, for his support for tripartism and workers' welfare.

He said he appreciated the award and his friendships with unionists, adding that he was receiving the medal on behalf of many colleagues, including the five healthcare workers who died trying to protect Singaporeans during the severe acute respiratory syndrome crisis in 2003.

In his time at various ministries, from health to national development, he looked to unionists for feedback on tough policies as they were being formulated, he said.

For example, the Proximity Housing Grant, which subsidises resale Housing Board flats for people living with or near their parents or children, came about after feedback from NTUC that young couples wanted to be near their parents so that their parents could help look after their children.

Support from all tripartite partners will be required as Singapore moves towards a car-lite future, Mr Khaw said. "Our strategy is to raise the competency level of our transport workers... Newer and better-paying jobs will be created along the way. The end result will be an even better commuter experience."

Joanna Seow

Security officer turned wealth planner among Model Worker award recipients

Six years ago, Mr Wai Chee Man was working as a security officer at DBS Bank's Plaza Singapura branch, where he sometimes helped to hand out brochures to customers when it was crowded.

He was surprised when the bank offered him a job as a teller, even though he had no experience in banking. "I thought why not? I felt there would be more opportunities to learn because banks cover a wide scope," said the 29-year-old.

From there, he moved into customer service, and last year he

asked to try wealth planning.

He spent around three months attending in-house courses and sitting external exams on investment and insurance products, and is now a wealth planning manager helping clients to build their savings and maximise their investment returns.

He also studied for a diploma in commerce in his own time, after joining the bank with just an O-level certificate to his name.

Mr Wai was one of six recipients of the inaugural Model Worker award

given out by the National Trades Union Congress at its annual May Day Awards ceremony yesterday.

He said he hopes to develop his knowledge and skills in more sophisticated investment products so that he can serve high-net-worth clients in DBS Treasures platform.

"I never thought I would end up here, but I enjoy my job because I can learn so much," he said.

Fellow recipient Johnsten Wee, 30, a patient service executive at Tan Tock Seng Hospital, was part of



Tan Tock Seng Hospital patient service executive Johnsten Wee (far left) and DBS Bank wealth planning manager Wai Chee Man were among the six recipients of the inaugural Model Worker award. ST PHOTO: TIMOTHY DAVID

team to process payment while the patients are waiting to see the doctor, so that they no longer have to wait for billing after consultation.

Mr Wee also learnt how to do medication supply verification to help patients order medicine while they are at the clinic, to shorten their waiting time at the pharmacy.

"I hope to inspire others to look at personal upgrading as a way of life, whether it's learning new things or taking on new challenges," he said.

Joanna Seow

EZ-Link finds illegal transactions on Fevo cards but no data breach

Claire Huang

Electronic payment system provider EZ-Link said yesterday that it detected suspicious overseas transactions made on EZ-Link Fevo Mastercard cards, but assured users that there was no data breach.

In response to queries from The Straits Times, the firm said: "We would like to assure EZ-Link Cepas cardholders that the unauthorised

transactions apply to EZ-Link's Fevo Mastercard cards, and do not apply to all local EZ-Link Cepas cards used in Singapore for transit."

"This is not a case of data breach," it said in a written statement. "No system was compromised."

A data breach, according to computer security firm Norton, is a security incident in which information is accessed without authorisation.

A Fevo cardholder told ST earlier that an EZ-Link customer service

officer called him on Thursday to say that the company detected an unauthorised transaction on his card. The officer said the card was being accessed from outside of Singapore and that "a few customers have the same problem".

EZ-Link said it was the first to detect these suspicious overseas transactions and immediately took action to investigate and block the cards from similar fraudulent transactions. Without giving details, it

said all affected cardholders have been informed and the money refunded. As an added precaution, EZ-Link has deactivated all affected cards and is in the process of issuing replacement cards to affected customers at no cost.

Mastercard said EZ-Link alerted it to the unauthorised transactions and had taken "urgent steps" to investigate and address the matter. It added that it continues to work closely with EZ-Link to prevent fur-

ther incidents. "We also encourage cardholders to regularly review their account statements and activity, and call their issuing financial institution for assistance if they suspect unauthorised transactions," Mastercard said.

The Fevo card was launched in April 2009 by EZ-Link. It can be used not only for commuting on public buses and trains, but also to make payments to all Mastercard merchants worldwide and all EZ-

Link merchants and partners here – including Electronic Road Pricing and parking gantries.

EZ-Link is looking to modernise its offerings and to discourage Singaporeans from topping up their ez-link cards with cash.

But in mobile payment, it faces rivals like tech giants Apple, Google, Alibaba and Tencent. It also comes under pressure from service providers like Grab and Carousell which have their own digital wallets, as well as banks like DBS Bank, OCBC Bank and United Overseas Bank that offer their own products.

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