

TEMASEK FOUNDATION

In Honour of Three Eminent Unionists
**G Muthukumarasamy, R.K.S. Nachiappan,
and Nithiah Nandan s/o Arumugam**



G Muthukumarasamy

G Muthukumarasamy (Kumar) joined the Amalgamated Union of Public Daily Rated Workers (AUPDRW) as a member when it was formed in 1992. He was then a daily-rated wireman for the Public Works Department. He became a senior electrician after upgrading and upskilling himself over the years. In the union, Kumar rose through the ranks and became its General Secretary in 2002 until his passing in 2019.

Kumar made it his life's work to protect the interest of daily-rated workers and low income workers, and was their champion for better work prospects and wages.

A firm believer in tripartism, he encouraged unions to work with employers and the Government for the betterment of workers.

He also firmly believed in training as the key to improving the lives of workers, and persuaded daily rated workers to upgrade themselves when the Government launched the National Skills Recognition System in 2000. He worked with companies to provide incentives to workers who underwent and completed training, for a win-win outcome for both workers and companies.

It was Kumar's lifelong ambition to convert daily-rated workers to a monthly wage scheme, which would allow them to progress further in their careers. He championed tirelessly for nearly three decades for the cause and his lifelong goal was fulfilled in 2021 when the remaining daily-rated public workers in AUPDRW were converted to monthly schemes.

Kumar was awarded the Public Service Medal in 2007, and the Comrade of Labour (Star) (Bar) Award (Posthumous) in 2020.

“ Brother Kumar firmly believed that the path to uplifting our workers’ livelihoods and their children’s life is through education. Recognising and honouring him, through the Temasek Foundation Scholarship under his name is not only befitting but will remind us to aspire for a better future through pursuing higher education and continuous learning. ”

Mr Sanjeev Kumar Tiwari
General Secretary, Amalgamated
Union of Public Employees



“ My first learning journey overseas was with Brother Kumar where we visited the city council of Kuala Lumpur and met with the union leaders there and the mayor. Even though I was a junior officer then, Brother Kumar took extremely good care of us, often checking in if we were tired, whether we had enough food, did we need more water. That’s the soft side of Brother Kumar.

But when union members’ well-being was at stake, Brother Kumar put on the tough front and stood firm to champion for the workers. He often shared with me his stories working at the Istana and how he had refused promotions to remain as a union leader. Despite his ill health then, he had been very positive and continued to fight for workers’ welfare. His passion for workers could be easily felt when you were with him. That’s the kind of man I knew of Brother Kumar, soft-hearted yet tough. ”

Dr Tommy Lin
Deputy Director, Membership Services Division,
National Trades Union Congress (NTUC)



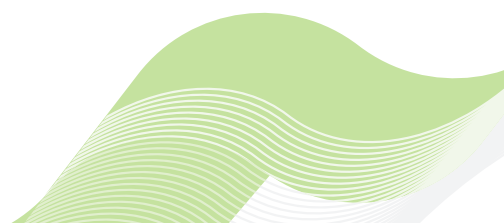
Nachiappan RK Sinniah

Nachiappan RK Sinniah (Nachi) had been involved in trade union works since the 1980s. He started as Branch Secretary and later took on the role of Deputy General Secretary of the Public Utilities Board (PUB) Staff Union in 1989.

As part of the Union of Power And Gas Employees (UPAGE) committee (from 1996), he was involved in the delicate task of garnering workers' support for corporatisation and bringing together daily-rated and monthly-rated workers under one union.

Nachi was General Secretary of UPAGE from 1999 -2015, and Emeritus General Secretary from 2015 until his passing in 2021.

Together with other key UPAGE leaders, he laid the cornerstone for tripartism and good industrial relations in the energy and power sector.



“ Brother Nachi’s contributions and legacy will live on and continue to inspire for years to come. In his courage, perseverance, righteousness, warmth and unflinching dedication to champion the interests of workers, Brother Nachi was a true union leader to his fellow workers, UPAGE, and the Labour Movement. ”

Ms Mary Liew, President, NTUC; and
Mr Ng Chee Meng, Secretary-General, NTUC



“ Brother Nachi always placed members’ aspirations and concerns as his priority whenever he faced management. His commitment to advocate for the Union and members, both at workplace and nationally, has benefitted many members and remains a cornerstone of UPAGE advocacy for the members. ”

Mr Abdul Samad Bin Abdul Wahab
General Secretary, UPAGE



Nithiah Nandan s/o Arumugam

Nithiah Nandan s/o Arumugam (Nithi) was a well-respected unionist who devoted his life to uplifting the lives of workers, especially low wage workers. He was a daily-rated worker who lived a life of sacrifice for the causes he passionately believed in. He chose to remain a daily-rated worker for 20 years, repeatedly turning down promotion opportunities so that he could champion training and skills upgrading for his co-workers. In doing so, he helped more than 2,000 daily rated workers move on to better lives. Nithi started his union career with the PUB Daily Rated Employees' Union, rising up to be its General Secretary in 1988. With the corporatisation of PUB's Electricity, Water and Gas

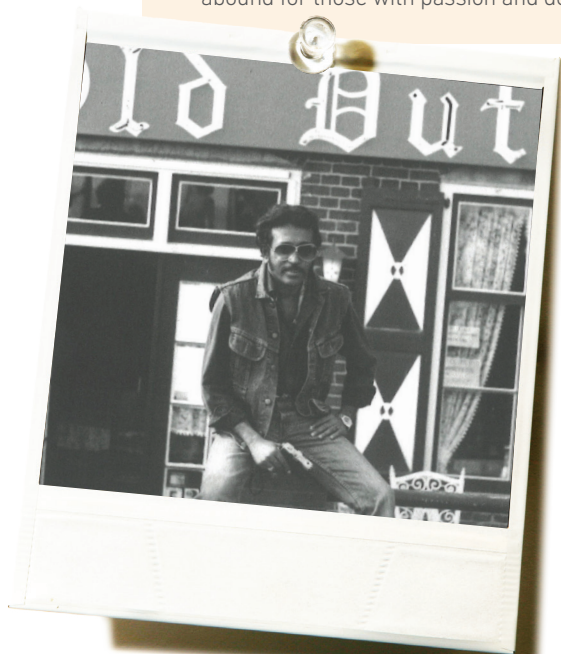
departments, Nithi became one of the key founding members of UPAGE when it was registered in 1995. He served as its General Secretary and then, Executive Secretary from 1999. Even in his final days fighting renal cancer, Nithi signed Collective Agreements to protect the interests of workers in the Singapore Power Group and generation companies. The Collective Agreements were particularly important as an assurance of job stability to the union members for the next three years, when three generation companies were put up for sale. Nithi signed off the final two Collective Agreements a day before he passed away on 21 June 2007.

“ As a union leader, he set a good example for his fellow workers by continuously upgrading his skills so that he remained relevant and productive at the workplace. His determination in skills upgrading soon became an inspiration for many workers who aspired to do better.

In 2002, Brother Nithiah agreed to be nominated by the labour movement to speak up for the interests of workers, particularly low-wage workers, in Parliament as a Nominated Member of Parliament (NMP). When asked about his NMP appointment, he said, 'I know how workers feel because I was once a daily-rated employee who used to take home about \$120 a month.' He was the right person for the job. His NMP appointment must have encouraged many people with humble beginnings that, in Singapore, opportunities abound for those with passion and dedication to serve.

”

Mr Lim Boon Heng
Secretary-General,
NTUC (1993 – 2006)



“ As one of UPAGE's founders, Brother Nithiah had set the foundation and instilled the culture of continuous upskilling among UPAGE leaders and members. He believed that through education and knowledge, members will be able to earn better wages and experience improved welfare and work prospects.

”

Mr Abdul Samad Bin Abdul Wahab
General Secretary, UPAGE

KEY FEATURES

OF THE TEMASEK FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

The Temasek Foundation – G Muthukumarasamy Scholarship, Temasek Foundation – RKS Nachiappan Scholarship, and Temasek Foundation – Nithiah Nandan Arumugam Scholarship are administered by various Institutes of Higher Learning – Institute of Technical Education, five polytechnics, and six universities.

The scholarships offer two key components: \$3,000 to \$5,000 for living expenses for the student recipient, and \$2,000 as a family recognition award for the family of the student.

The scholarships will be allocated based on merit and income criteria, are bond-free, tenable for the entire course of study, and renewable yearly subject to the recipients meeting the criteria.

Eligible applicants must be Singaporeans with per capita income of not more than S\$1,875.

Students of all ages are welcome to apply, including mature students.





“ Individuals who come from lower-income backgrounds may face more hurdles in furthering their education and skills upgrading due to financial pressures. These scholarships aim to give them an extra boost in their educational journey to help them realise their full potential. We hope to inspire students of all ages to follow in the footsteps of unionists G Muthukumarasamy, R.K.S. Nachiappan, and Nithiah Nandan s/o Arumugam, who recognised the value of education and promoted lifelong learning. ”

Mr Lim Hock Chuan
Head, Programmes,
Temasek Foundation



Subari Bin Samuri and Raman s/o Kathavarayan from the Amalgamated Union of Public Employees (back, from left) posing with Mdm Rajah Mani S Manickam, wife of G Muthukumarasamy and scholarship recipients – Chan Shi Hui Mikki from Singapore Polytechnic and Laila Mishazira Binte Muhammad Jufri from Republic Polytechnic (front, from left)



Tan Ban Leong and T Ravinthiran from the Union of Power And Gas Employees (back, from right) posing with Ms Rogini Nachiappan, daughter of Nachiappan RK Sinniah (front right) and scholarship recipients – Darrell Lu from Singapore University of Technology and Design (front left) and Tan Wee Kiat from Singapore Management University (back left)



Hassan Bin Haji K Ahamad (back right) and Mohamad Nazir Bin Sani (front left) from the Union of Power And Gas Employees posing with Ms Pravita Nithiah Nandan, daughter of Nithiah Nandan s/o Arumugam (front right) and scholarship recipients – S Shaun Shankar from Singapore University of Social Sciences and Glenis Ang from the Institute of Technical Education (back, from left)



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We would like to thank the National Trades Union Congress, the Amalgamated Union of Public Employees, and the Union of Power And Gas Employees, as well as the families of the late G Muthukumarasamy, R.K.S. Nachiappan, and Nithiah Nandan /so Arumugam, for their strong support in the production of this booklet.

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To view a video on the
three eminent unionists



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