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# Medal for improving cleaning industry

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Mr Milton Ng, a proponent for improving working conditions for cleaners, received a Medal of Commendation Award. -- PHOTO: DANIEL NEO

AS FAR back as 2009, Mr Milton Ng was already pushing for the professionalisation of the cleaning sector and he wrote a paper on it during his first term as the president of the Environmental Management Association of Singapore.

His efforts paid off when a national move to raise the basic wages of cleaners was pushed through last year.

Cleaning companies now have to adopt a wage and training ladder with baseline pay at each level in order to be licensed.

Basic pay for cleaners went up from around \$850 a month to \$1,000 a month as a result.

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Mr Ng, 52, does not take credit for the success, pointing instead to the Tripartite Cluster for Cleaners as a platform through which the Government, unions and employers came to a consensus.

"There must be buy-in from all the stakeholders," he said.

The director of Ramky Cleantech Services, who has not been afraid to lose contracts because of what he believes in, was recognised yesterday by the labour movement with a Medal of Commendation Award.

The Building Construction and Timber Industries Employees' Union, which nominated him for the award, credits him with giving "direct and practical inputs" on improving the cleaning industry and for supporting his workers in joining the union.

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He has also sent half of his company's cleaners for at least two cleaning modules under the national training framework, Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications.

Now that the new wage model is in place, Mr Ng has his sights set on improving the softer side of workers' jobs, starting with proper rest areas wherever they work.

"You pay a good salary, does that mean they still have to eat their meals at the staircases?" he said.

"As responsible employers, we must have a moral obligation to our staff."

**JOANNA SEOW**

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