



KONGRES KESATUAN SEKERJA MALAYSIA
[MALAYSIAN TRADES UNION CONGRESS]
[PENANG DIVISION]

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To, Editors,

**IN MEMORY OF A DEDICATED TRADE UNIONIST – BALAKRISHNAN
NADESON (20.10.1949 – 11.1.2023)**

On 11.1.2023, the trade union movement lost a dedicated grass-root oriented leader – Balakrishnan Nadeson. He succumbed to what is stated as “acute coronary syndrome”. He was 73 years old.

I have known him since 1978. He was, then, employed with a company called Penfibre Sdn. Bhd. Situated in the Prai Industrial Zone where he began his trade union activism. He was, subsequently, elected to the Executive Council of the Penang and Province Wellesley Textile And Garment Workers Union. He was robust, proactive and outspoken not only when dealing with the company but also in his capacity as a member of the Union’s Executive Council. He was one who called a spade a spade and never accepted any shades in between!

He was a pugilist – ever prepared to put on his gloves when challenged. Though a “flyweight” in build he had the heart and soul of a “heavyweight” in the defence of worker’s rights.

Then the inevitable happened – he was dismissed by the company on charges that, until today I believe, were actuated by bad faith on the part of the company. His dismissal was escalated to the Industrial Court which, rightly, held that the said dismissal was without just cause or excuse.

During the interim period he joined Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) and, by extension, the Consumer Association of Penang (CAP) where he continued his activism until he return to his roots – the trade union movement.

In 1988 he joined the Electrical Industrial Workers Union (EIWU) as it’s Industrial Relations Officer. From then on, and the next more than three decades, he continued from where he left of – the emancipation of the working class.

Bala was involved with the Penang MTUC Division since 1988 serving as it’s Assistance Secretary from 1991 and a few terms thereafter. Until his declining health made it impossible, he kept attending all Division committee meetings and activities.

That was a distinctive trait in him. Come hell or high water he never ever neglected on his obligations.

UNITY IS STRENGTH

A lesser known fact is that Bala is the only Malaysian Trade Unionist to have attended, and obtained accreditation from Aston University, Birmingham, England in the area of Occupational Safety & Health. In fact Workers' Safety & Health was an issue that was very close to his heart. 28th April is the International Workers Memorial Day, a day of remembrance for workers killed, disabled or injured at work. In 1992 the Penang Division of Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) observed that day at a workers monument build in honour of the workers who died in the construction of the Penang Bridge near the Prai Toll Plaza. We were the first to do so in the whole of Asia. And AS YOU WOULD HAVE GUESSED THE CREDIT GOES TO BALA! As a matter of a fact he brought, all the way from England, a banner bearing the slogan "Mourn For The Death And Fight For The Living" which banner the MTUC Penang Division has never failed to put up at every International Workers Memorial in 28th April since 1992.

Bala was also a firm believer in empowering the grass-root through education in the and the beneficiaries ought to be in the thousands.

He was a rare breed – a campaigner for workers rights, a proponent for workers occupational safety & health, for environmentalism, consumerism and civil society movement. His integrity was unquestionable and his commitment to the workers cause unwavering.

To his family I, on behalf of the workers, say thank you, thank you for gifting him to the people's struggle. We are eternally indebted to you for giving him the space and liberty in his endeavours to bring forth meaningful transformation to the plight of the workers. With your blessings he fought a truly remarkable fight. He will walk amongst the righteous in the abode of god almighty.

Rest in eternal bliss my beloved comrade!

K. VEERIAH
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