

NTUC youth wing kicks off on dance floor

PM Lee joins the party with 800 others at new NTUC clubhouse DXO in The Esplanade Mall

► Leslie Koh

THE labour movement has launched a new youth wing to reach out to young people, to try to up its "cool" quotient.

Accompanied by spinning disco lights and ear-shattering dance music, Young NTUC came to life last night at NTUC Club's latest clubhouse, DXO.

Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong did the honours at the former Embassy bar at The Esplanade Mall.

Clad in a shiny beige-gold batik shirt, he wound his way through the packed dance floor, then launched Young NTUC with a CD that set off the giant display.

The 800 or so people at the party then took to the dance

floor at DXO.

DXO is the seventh clubhouse run by NTUC Club. Puzzled party-goers may wonder what the name stands for. Some call it Dance X-tra-O-rdinary.

NTUC Club's chief executive Chng Hee Kok said at a media preview of the club last week: "We wanted a name that was hip and cool. So since we are located next to the durian, we thought we would call it the XO version of the durian."

The "durian" is the colloquial name for the Esplanade building, in reference to its twin spiky domes.

Meant for unionists below the age of 35, Young NTUC aims to attract more young workers to join the National Trades Union Congress, and get younger members to be more active.

It is part of the labour movement's overall efforts to rejuvenate itself and get younger leaders into the team.

About a third of NTUC's 450,000 members are below 35 years old.

The new youth wing also hopes to get more of the unions affiliated to the NTUC to set up their own youth chapters.

Added Young NTUC's chairman Edwin Lye, 35: "We're trying to project a vibrant, energetic image to the labour movement so that we can get more people to join it."

On top of seminars for younger union leaders, the youth wing is planning adventure weekends and even its own version of reality TV show *The Amazing Race*.

One of Young NTUC's youngest members, Miss Herlena Mashekoo, 25, hopes the new youth wing can give her more opportunities to meet unionists from other industries.

Said the kindergarten teacher: "My industry consists of teachers, so I hope to interact more, find out more about how unions serve workers."

She added with a laugh: "And if you are single, there are opportunities to... well, not be available after that."



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