

THE STRAITS TIMES

Thanking migrant workers for building Singapore and giving them a bigger reason to smile



Migrant workers wait for their turn at the game booths during the May Day Migrant Workers Celebration on June 11. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM



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SINGAPORE - It was fun and games for more than 8,000 workers at the Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC) Recreation Club in Soon Lee Road on Sunday.

More importantly, the National Trades Union Congress (NTUC) May Day Migrant Workers Celebration, organised by NTUC and MWC, was held to honour and thank migrant workers here, said NTUC deputy secretary-general Heng Chee How.

Mr Heng, who was the guest of honour at the event, told the migrant workers in his speech: "We welcome workers from all over the world... to come to work alongside Singaporeans to build this country, to build this economy, and build a better life for us here in Singapore, as well as for yourself and your families back in your home countries."

On Sunday evening, there were hybrid concerts featuring song and dance performances for the migrant workers at the MWC Recreation Club and Capital Development Tuas Dormitory. The concerts were expected to attract over 168,000 migrant workers in physical attendance and online.

Earlier in the day, the grand finals for migrant worker teams competing in cricket, futsal and volleyball were held at the recreation club.

There were more reasons for migrant workers to smile.

The celebration was marked with a signing of a memorandum of understanding between the Migrant Workers' Assistance Fund (MWAFF) and MigrantWell Singapore (MWS), a charity set up by SBF Foundation with the support of founding donors, and the Estates of Khoo Teck Puat and Ng Teng Fong, to provide affordable dental services for migrant workers.

This comes after the launch in November 2022 of the MWC Associate Membership, which provides migrant workers with a group insurance plan to cover critical illness or death, and other benefits for training and skills upgrading, telco packages, medical and employment agency services.

To date, MWC has successfully onboarded 25,000 migrant workers to the associate membership.

MWAFF chairman Kuah Boon Wee said: "The dental care for migrant workers is not covered in both the medical insurance requirement and the Primary Care Plan under the primary healthcare system for migrant workers. We hope the new dental benefit can complement existing dental care for migrant workers and encourage them to seek dental care at an affordable cost."

Dental care is an essential aspect of overall health and well-being, and yet often overlooked by migrant workers due to concerns over associated costs, said NTUC.

MWS chairman Ho Meng Kit said: "With the joint funding by MigrantWell and MWC, we have appointed two service providers, St Andrew's Mission Hospital and HealthServe, to provide affordable and accessible dental care for migrant workers. The programme will also cover other activities like awareness, education and dental screening."

As part of the partnership, MWAFF will donate \$3 million to fund the programme for six years. The programme is expected to offer better access to dental services for 4,000 migrant workers annually.



NTUC deputy secretary-general Heng Chee How (centre) distributing popcorn to migrant workers at the May Day Migrant Workers Celebration on June 11. ST PHOTO: KEVIN LIM

It enables migrant workers to pay a flat fee of up to \$30 for dental services, with MWC associate members receiving a \$5 discount.

Urging more migrant workers to sign up as members, Mr Heng said: “There is great value in this membership, not only in terms of discounts of which it is significant, but also in terms of how we can send important messages to you and better understand your needs, so that you know you are safe in Singapore and that there’s always an umbrella over your head.”

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