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Domestic helpers get into the spirit of Christmas



Filipino domestic worker Jane Hortillas Gabinete, 43, dressed up as a Christmas tree for a best-dressed competition during the festive celebration organised by the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training yesterday at its clubhouse in Bukit Merah. ST PHOTO: LIM YAOHUI

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For her first Christmas party, Ms Jane Hortillas Gabinete came dressed as a Christmas tree, with baubles and tinsel on her.

The 43-year-old foreign domestic worker, who has lived in Singapore for 13 years, stayed up from 10pm to 3am one day last week to sew the green dress.

"I thought many people would wear red for Christmas. So I wanted to do something different," said Ms Gabinete, who is from the Philippines.

She won the second prize - a bag - in a best-dressed competition at the celebration organised by the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training (Fast) yesterday.

"Normally, I spend Christmas alone at home and talk to my family on the phone. It's the first time I joined a Christmas party, and it was very enjoyable," said Ms Gabinete.

She was one of about 550 domestic helpers who attended the event at the Fast Clubhouse in Bukit Merah.

Besides the competition, they were also treated to a Christmas lunch, carol singing as well as song and dance performances.

Fast executive committee member Leslie Yong said in a speech that Fast's mission is to provide a balanced work life for all foreign domestic workers in Singapore.

"You work hard for six days a week and for some, seven days. Hence, it is crucial that you have a proper day of rest, unwind and find time for yourself to meet friends, take on a hobby, pursue a training programme or engage in fitness activities on your rest day," he said.

Joanna Seow

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