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New, bigger and Fast clubhouse for foreign domestic workers by mid-2019



Plans are afoot to rent the now-defunct Telok Kurau Secondary School building as the new clubhouse under the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training (Fast), Fast's president Seah Seng Choon announced on Oct 21, 2018. ST PHOTO: KHALID BABA

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SINGAPORE - Foreign domestic workers may soon get a new clubhouse that is 10 times larger than their current premises - and a place where they can relax, socialise, exercise, pick up skills, undergo counselling, and remit money, among others.

Plans are afoot to rent the now-defunct Telok Kurau Secondary School building located at Chin Cheng Avenue as the new clubhouse under the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training (Fast).

The news was announced by Fast's president Seah Seng Choon during the ninth FDW Day on Sunday (Oct 21) held at the Institute of Technical Education (ITE) College Central campus in Ang Mo Kio.

Addressing the maids in his welcome speech, Mr Seah said: "Last year, I promised you a new and bigger clubhouse in view of the huge membership (of Fast). The good news is that we have already identified a larger location for our new clubhouse and we plan to move in by the middle of next year."

Mr Seah said Fast is currently in talks to rent the Telok Kurau Secondary School building, renovate it, and move in by mid-next year.

Renovation costs are estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, but he said Fast is confident of raising the money through sponsors, partners and well-wishers.

Fast's current 500-capacity clubhouse at Jalan Bukit Merah, which offers FDWs a place to relax, socialise and pick up a hobby, is fully utilised, said Mr Seah.

At last count, Fast is understood to have about 8,000 members.

The new facility, which can accommodate some 5,000 maids, will feature a training academy, social service hub with counselling and mediation services, and more.

There will be a sports arena for games such as volleyball, basketball, badminton; a gymnasium; aerobics hall, yoga room, music lounge, cafeteria, sundry shop, and more.

FDWs will be able to remit money, utilise courier services and top up their SIM cards too.

Said Mr Seah: "Right now, we sometimes don't have enough room to organise new activities for FDWs. We need the space to organise different kinds of activities at the same time.

"We hope FDWs will gather at the new clubhouse, instead of at other places such as Lucky Plaza. We want them to have a place to call their own, where they can celebrate their birthday, enjoy the facilities and activities such as line dancing and zumba."

Fast, he shared, will also venture into providing training courses for FDWs to build capabilities in caring for people with stroke, dementia, Parkinson's disease and disabilities.

These new courses, which are expected to start in a couple of months, are in response to Singapore's ageing population. Skills taught include knowing when to give medication, how to move patients, how to communicate with them and where to seek help.

Earlier this month, Fast launched the Caregiver Support Service and Helpline (1800-339-2273, or 1800 FDW CARE), to help FDWs who provide caregiving services manage their stress and build mental resilience.

At Sunday's event, awards were given out in categories such as FDW of the year and FDW employer of the year.

Indonesian FDW Sri Wahyuni, 51, who won the FDW of the year award, said she typically spends her rest days hanging out with friends in Bukit Gombak or at City Plaza.

She said: "I'm not very familiar with this new clubhouse, but I am looking forward to it."

Sri Lankan FDW Bopege Podihamy, 62, the first runner-up in the category, said: "I really want to go to the new clubhouse. I like badminton."

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