Holiday? But work never stops

Thankfully for those who hold jobs on holidays, things still continue to run smoothly.

Instead of joining the festivities and visiting family and friends on the first day of Chinese New Year last Thursday, some Singaporeans had to work.

It is all part of the job, say those people who provide essential services which help keep hospitals, restaurants and theme parks open.

To while the day down as people enjoy eating and drinking, some found it difficult to enjoy the festivities while at work.

Life goes on in Changi Airport, as they provided services helping a mother give birth to a baby boy at a restaurant — all with a smile.

BALU KARUPPIAH (above), 42
Restaurant supervisor at Banana Leaf Apollo

It was the usual scene at Banana Leaf Apollo over the holidays. The Indian restaurant on East Coast Road would usually be packed with Chinese New Year revelers, but the restaurant was quiet on the first day when Mr Balu Karuppiah was working.

"I am just doing my part," said Mr Karuppiah, who has worked every Chinese New Year since he came here from Chennai, India, seven years ago. On this day, the restaurant, which has another outlet at Little India Arcade, usually sees its regular Chinese customers come in, especially for takeaway orders of its signature dishes.

"In the spirit of the holiday, some customers give hongbao to the staff, but Mr Karuppiah is quick to dismiss the notion that they are looking forward to the money. "The supervisor, who is married to a British national, said: "We are not calculating and we are expecting nothing from our customers. But if they give us a hongbao, we say thank you." He spent the day making sure that orders were smoothly dealt with at the restaurant, which can seat 380 people.

SITI SHABDIAH MOHAMED SALIM (right), 26
Quality service senior officer at Wild Wild Wet theme park in Pasir Ris

It was a mock lion dance flooding down last year that threw Siti Shabdiah into a frenzy. The show was snarling and the lettuce that she had bought for the show was now in danger of being washed away.

"Luckily for us, a nearby supermarket was open and she dashed over to buy the right lettuce just in time to feed the felines. She even got a lucky rub from them."

Still, the day was supposed to give her a good luck day to make it a good year, which it was.

And she hopes the luck will continue into the rest of the festivities after the new year. She is one of 300 staff members working at the park today.

"I am excited to meet him and take pictures. Hopefully, I can get the goats into the video too."

Her small team ensures all go for guests at the park for the public holiday. The team makes sure the park is clean, fills in any gaps for queues for ticket booths and rides.

"I estimated that the park saw about 2,000 people, which is more than a normal weekend crowd of 1,050 to 1,000 guests."

Working through the Chinese New Year holiday is a simple matter of give and take for Siti Shabdiah who has worked at the park for six years. She has to balance being a security guard and her younger sister is a hawker.

"When they don't have any tourist activity, we can spend time with our families. But if they give us a hongbao, we say thank you." After her shift ended at 4pm, she headed home for her own dinner with her family and was not thinking about the money. "On this day as her mother, who is a nurse, works on the morning shift, I am not thinking about the money, but they give because it's about the give-and-take for Ms Siti Shahida who has 40 years' experience as a nurse, is excited to work on Chinese New Year because the atmosphere is happy and celebratory. Her usual work entails planning parties and food for guests. But this year, she thought, 'Aiyah, why must work?'

"I told my grandmother during the news round that I would be working on Chinese New Year and she was delighted, saying she would be sending her regards to me."

Mr Balu Karuppiah has worked every Chinese New Year since he came here from Chennai, India, seven years ago. On this day, the restaurant, which has another outlet at Little India Arcade, usually sees its regular Chinese customers come in, especially for takeaway orders of its signature dishes.

And in the spirit of the holiday, some customers give hongbao to the staff, but Mr Karuppiah is quick to dismiss the notion that they are looking forward to the money. "The supervisor, who is married to a British national, said: "We are not calculating and we are expecting nothing from our customers. But if they give us a hongbao, we say thank you." He spent the day making sure that orders were smoothly dealt with at the restaurant, which can seat 380 people.

Ryan Onn, right, 27
Assistant patrol supervisor at the casino at Resorts World Sentosa

It is "happening" at Resorts World Sentosa’s casino, which is why assistant patrol supervisor Ryan Onn was glad to be on shift on the first day of Chinese New Year.

He had seen the excitement last year, when the casino opened on the first day of Chinese New Year and saw long queues of gamblers. It had been just a month work in the casino, but he was already looking forward to the next year. He recalled that the crowd was three times the amount as the usual guests.

"He said, amused: "I don't understand the mathematics behind it, as there is a 24/7 rule."

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