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Labour chief Lim Swee Say urged workers and employers to build on the momentum by continuing to improve and develop.



Mohammad Saiful Kassim (middle), customer service manager at McDonald's, who won one of the two SuperStar awards this year. (Photo: Loke Kok Fai)

SINGAPORE: A total of 1,881 food and beverage (F&B) service professionals were recognised at the 20th Annual Excellent Service Awards on Thursday (Oct 2).

Held at the NTUC Auditorium, the awards ceremony honours individuals who have been previously recognised at other awards for going the extra mile in delivering exemplary service.

Labour chief Lim Swee Say, who was Guest-of-Honour, said he had noticed an increase in service quality over the years. He urged workers and employers to build on the momentum by continuing to improve and develop.

He outlined areas for the industry to step up efforts in - service quality; product quality; customers' perceived value of service and food; the total dining experience from pre- to post-dining; and consistency of food and service delivery. Mr Lim said such improvements would require the combined efforts of good management, workers and customers to work together to uphold Singapore as a "hospitable food and dining hub".

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Twenty-five-year-old Mohammad Saiful Kassim stood out among the almost 1,900 other awardees to clinch the prestigious SuperStar Award. He is one of the two winners of the highest Excellent Service Award this year. He joined McDonald's as a crew member at the age of 14.

The customer service manager said he owes his success to his colleagues, his superiors and a mantra that he recites to himself every morning. He said: "I always tell myself that every customer deserves to receive excellent service from the staff of McDonald's. So I always remind myself that my customers are the base that have been supporting me since I was 14 years old."

## **RAISING SERVICE STANDARDS OVER THE YEARS**

According to the labour movement, it is F&B customer service professionals like Mr Mohammad Saiful who have raised service standards over the years. A survey done by the Singapore Management University's Institute of Service Excellence - the Customer Satisfaction Index of Singapore - showed an upward trend over the years since 2007.

In six years, restaurants went up from 68 to 72 points, and cafes also went up from 67 to 71 points. Food courts also showed progress, going up from 59 to 66 points in three years.

However, the growing manpower shortage in the sector poses challenges to further improvements, which has prompted the labour movement to urge companies to find ways to redesign work processes.

Mr Lim said: "At the end of the day, I would say that there is no easy way out, because this tight labour market is here to stay for a while. Therefore, it is important that we all look for more innovative ways to move ahead."

This includes the use of technology where possible, such as the use of mobile ordering devices and automated cooking machines, so that service staff can focus on bringing the human touch to customers.

- CNA/dl/xk