Bridging gap with migrant workers

Week-long event at NUS will bring locals and workers together

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By day, Bangladeshi worker Md Mubin Hossain paints walls and cleans as a domestic helper. By night, the 34-year-old master poet recites his poems about loneliness and homesickness.

So, when the National University of Singapore and Yale-NUS College joint event titled ‘Bridge the Gap’ kicks off today, Mubin and other migrant workers will get a chance to showcase their talents.

The five-day series of events, which begins today on the NUS campus, is expected to bring together close to 400 students and members of the public, and more than 1,000 migrant workers.

The event, says NUS vice-president Dr Victor Yew, 74, said: "We wanted not just to raise awareness about the very crucial role that migrant workers play in Singapore. But also to empower them."

The ‘Bridge the Gap’ event builds on the successful popularization of 27 Bangladeshi workers being brought around for singing and poetry at homes and coffee shops in the University Town area in February this year.

‘Bridge the Gap’ was initiated in response to feedback that a lot of migrant workers long to share their personal stories and experiences with Singaporeans, and the Singaporean community’s desire to learn more about them.

The programme is the result of a collaboration between NUS’s Centre for Social Work and Community Care, the National University of Singapore’s Centre for Social Work and Community Care, and a group of migrant workers who are part of the Target 2000 Migrant Workers’ Association.

The event is an expansion of the first ‘Bridge the Gap’ event, which was held last year. At that time, a group of 27 Bangladeshi workers was brought around the university and the city to meet with students, faculty members and staff.

The workers performed songs and recitations for the public, and shared their stories and experiences.

The event is an opportunity for students to connect with migrant workers and gain a deeper understanding of their culture and experiences.

The event will feature a range of activities, including performances by migrant workers, workshops on migrant workers’ rights, and talks by experts on migrant workers’ issues.

The event is open to the public and will be held on the NUS campus from now until April 13.