

Jobs, jobs, jobs. That has been the catchphrase in recent months since the Covid-19 pandemic rocked the world economically and emotionally.

And saving jobs by deployment to new areas with skills training is one way the Government has been helping Singaporeans keep their livelihood.

Golf clubs in Singapore have also done their part by keeping their marshals, caddies and buggy bay helpers employable during this tough period.

Tanah Merah Country Club caddie Jumahat Ahmad is one such employee who has benefited from the club's and its members' generosity and benevolence.

The 51-year-old has been working at TMCC for the last 33 years, a testament to his happiness with the club for having taken care of him all through the years.

"When I started working here, the Garden course had only nine-holes," said Jumahat, who has been a caddie at TMCC since 1987 – five years after the club's inauguration.

He works to support his family and ageing mother who live with him in a five-room Housing Development Board flat in Bedok.

When golf courses closed on April 7 because of the Circuit Breaker measures, caddies like Jumahat were affected financially because of loss of caddie fees, allowances and tips.

"I needed the job. Supporting my family and mum were my main concerns. And the bills were mounting," he said.

As caddies are not com-

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# GOLF CLUBS HELP STAFF KEEP THEIR JOBS

TANAH MERAH MEMBERS STEP FURTHER BY RAISING FUNDS FOR CADDIES AMID THE PANDEMIC



**TMCC caddie Jumahat Ahmad places a golf bag in the buggy.**

pulsory in local golf clubs, they are often hired on a part-time basis, either when requested by golfers or to assist in operations during tournament days. As such, they do not draw a monthly salary and their income varies each month.

However, his concerns were eased thanks to the appeal by the club to members, who stepped forward to ren-

der financial assistance to the workhorses of the golf course.

On April 12, the general committee of TMCC appealed to their members for donations to their Caddie Welfare Fund – an existing fund that is in place for aspects such as caddie insurance and welfare.

So in April and May, 28 caddies received financial assistance in two cash pay-

outs to tide them through the period before golf courses reopened on June 19.

"I'm very thankful for the committee and members in looking out for us, and supporting us through this difficult time," beamed Jumahat.

In addition to the financial assistance from the Caddie Welfare Fund, Jumahat said that the club has assisted caddies in applying for eligible relief schemes that were announced by the Government during the Circuit Breaker period.

The club's director of golf, Ian Roberts, explained that even with the government relief schemes, the club wanted to ensure that assistance was available to all their caddies.

"We didn't know whether all our caddies were eligible for these relief schemes, but we knew that some of them came from families that relied on their income. Through the generosity of our members, we are glad to offer some relief," he added.

The remaining donations will be placed in the fund as a safety blanket for caddies, in the event that golf courses are closed once more due to the pandemic.

TMCC also prides in the fact that despite so much inactivity on the courses, it did

not let off or retrench any staff.

So also Warren Golf and Country Club, which retained all its golf operations staff and helped them by applying for the Government's Job Support Scheme.

"We have about a dozen marshals and buggy bay helpers, and they all remain employable," said Warren general manager Jinder Aujla.

Marina Bay Golf Course (MBGC) also took steps to provide support to their affected staff.

While the public golf course saw a substantial drop in revenue, a spokesman said that the course did not resort to pay cuts or layoffs to ease the financial strain.

"We carried out regular staff engagement online to assure staff on continuous salary payment, and that there was no retrenchment," said the spokesman.

MBGC also secured temporary accommodation for its Malaysian staff as they were unable to travel home due to the border lockdown.

With the added time, MBGC turned its attention to its staff, encouraging them to upgrade their skills and knowledge through online courses and cross-department training.