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This article is harrowing to read: it describes the abuse and torture inflicted on a young domestic worker from Myanmar by her Singaporean employer. Piang Ngaih Don died in July 2016; her employer pleaded guilty to 28 charges, including culpable homicide. <https://t.co/HzsM3agnbb>

Piang Ngaih Don's story is told in this documentary by @LianainFilms: <https://t.co/j3E50wD9Qs> She was a single mother who left her little boy with her sister in her village when she came to Singapore.

While working for Gaiyathiri Murugayan's family in Singapore, Piang Ngaih Don was not allowed a mobile phone and did not have any days off.

The abuse and torture might have been exceptionally cruel, but this deprivation of days off and restrictions on devices is not uncommon.

The Ministry of Manpower said Piang Ngaih Don's employment agent spoke to her twice during her first 6 months, but didn't pick up any issues. She also passed her medical exam after 6 months, and saw the same doctor again later, but nothing was flagged. <https://t.co/nOzERRODoq>

The Ministry of Manpower also said that it's reviewing the reporting system for doctors who conduct these six-monthly medical exams. The doctor had seen bruises on Piang Ngaih Don, but her employer claimed it was because she fell frequently. <https://t.co/f06LmXblgu> <https://t.co/EdPnrzfzao>

The court heard that the doctor had seen bruises around the maid's eye sockets and cheeks, but Gaiyathiri claimed that the victim fell down frequently as she was clumsy.



Gaiyathiri turned down the doctor's suggestions for further tests on the victim's swollen legs in case of underlying conditions.

The Ministry of Manpower has also said that they are going to "intensify" efforts to interview domestic workers about their well-being, and to review measures like the blacklisting of bad employers. <https://t.co/VmIDhzdNNP>
<https://t.co/kNq4M5jsZd>

"MOM will intensify our efforts to reach out to and interview all new foreign domestic workers about their well-being, and also engage with healthcare providers to see how we can support them to identify cases of possible abuse."

It urged members of the public to reach out to the Centre for Domestic Employees or the Foreign Domestic Worker Association for Social Support and Training if they are aware of ill-treatment of these workers.

In her Facebook post, Mrs Teo noted that Piang worked in Singapore for less than a year and was examined by doctors on at least two occasions. Her employment agency also spoke with her on two separate occasions.

"Sadly, on none of these occasions were signs of her distress picked up. As a community of support to foreign domestic workers, we have to do better," she said.

She also said that her ministry's review of protective measures for foreign domestic workers will continue.

"These would include the threshold for blacklisting errant employers, as well as improving measures to detect abuse," she added.

But these measures won't be enough if we don't address the severe power imbalance. @home_migrantssg's statement makes important recommendations, such as allowing domestic workers to live out, and guaranteeing rest days. <https://t.co/4I867edKF0>

This is a horrifying case and will trigger calls for harsh punishments for the perpetrators. But as @home_migrantssg points out, enforcement and punishment only come in after the fact, *after* abuse has been endured. There needs to be pre-emptive measures to protect workers.

If anyone would like to donate money to Phiang Ngaih Don's family, @home_migrantssg can transfer the funds to them on your behalf. Details here ■■■ <https://t.co/B7IUGoDrGQ>



HOME has been receiving numerous messages and calls on whether we are doing a dedicated fundraiser for Phiang Ngaih Don. We are truly moved to see the community's desire to help and support Phiang's family in the wake of her abuse. While we are not doing a fundraising drive, HOME will be assisting in making a transfer of funds from members of the public who wish to donate to her family.

If you wish to donate to Phiang's family, you can donate to HOME via Paynow (UEN T04SS0193H) and in the reference section, please indicate "PND". HOME will ensure that these funds go directly to Phiang's family.

Thank you to everyone who has reached out to express your sadness at the news of Phiang's abuse. We all grieve her death. Let us remember her and ensure that no other domestic worker faces her predicament.

There are lots of policies/processes that need to be reviewed, but what urgently needs to be reviewed (yet doesn't seem to be mentioned) is how our policies infantilise domestic workers, deprive them of agency, and leave them at the mercy of their employers.

Even though they're adults, the relationship that domestic workers are forced to have with their employers is one that none of the us would want to have with our employers.

In 2014, I met a domestic worker who was 38 years old and still couldn't discharge herself from hospital without her employer's authorisation. She'd been ill-treated by this employer and didn't want to go home with them.

<https://t.co/vtNRcAMY5E>

Singapore has legislation that says workers should have a weekly day off, but allows employers to pay workers in lieu of this day off. The idea is that if a worker wants to give up their rest day to earn some extra money, they should be able to do that. But...

...this doesn't take power dynamics into account. Employers can pay workers a token sum and say that the worker agreed to this arrangement to give up their day off. Many workers have debts to pay and families to support—will they dare to say no to their employers?