

## Open new sources for maids, says agency association

WE AVOIDED commenting publicly about the salary hike announced last month by 17 major employment agencies because we are a trade body, and especially when there were immediate allegations of price-fixing by employers and in the media ("Hiking maid's salary is unfair, misleading" by Ms Alice Cheah; Thursday).

Subsequently, the Competition Commission of Singapore was reported to be investigating the salary hike as well.

As a trade body, we cannot prescribe minimum maid salaries or agency fees.

The pay of Indonesian maids increased gradually because of market forces, conditions and wage trends, and not because it was dictated by us.

Ms Cheah rightly singled out the exorbitant placement fees imposed by maid agencies as the cause of the salary hike.

We have tried but failed in securing legislation relating to deductions that can be made from the salaries of maids.

Many employers and agencies failed to note that the 17 agencies were seeking a reduction in the number of months of placement fee.

Apart from placement fees, Singapore is not a preferred destination for Indonesian maids because of government rules regarding age requirement, the English entry test and the increasing number of agency licences issued.

To attract maids, employers will also have to accept that they may have to pay higher agency fees to offset the burden borne by the maids; and this is again a function of demand and supply.

We highlight these issues regularly to the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) in

dialogue sessions and through the media.

We have also appealed for new markets to be opened, to facilitate the expansion of our members' business.

Although we have not been conferred with legal authority to act against unscrupulous agencies, we report their errant practices to MOM when we receive a complaint from the public.

With the removal of the compulsory accreditation requirement on agencies on April 1, MOM will have to take on a bigger policing role.

**Shirley Ng (Ms)**  
President,  
Association of Employment Agencies  
(Singapore)

Regardless of origin...

**"Shouldn't there be an authority responsible for reviewing and approving pay hike proposals?"**

**MR JIMMY HO:** "Miss Alice Cheah ('Hiking maids' pay unfair, misleading'; Thursday) stated that it's reasonable to revise the starting pay of maids from time to time via the Association of Employment Agencies Singapore. Shouldn't there be an authority responsible for reviewing and approving pay hike proposals, even if they originate from the association?"