

Relationship between employers, maids a symbiotic one

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I applaud the latest move by the courts to impose heavier penalties on employers who abuse their foreign domestic workers (FDWs).

The FDW abuse cases that have surfaced merely represent the tip of the iceberg and are often brought to justice belatedly.

Many families living in Singapore do not realise or appreciate that they enjoy affordable live-in domestic help here.

FDWs perform a wide spectrum of domestic duties, such as caring for the young and the aged, cooking, doing the laundry and housekeeping.

These often extend to other incidental but crucial household tasks, such as gardening, ferrying children to and from school, accompanying the elderly to hospital visits, and grocery shopping.

My 20-year experience as an employment agent recruiting FDWs for Singapore families has given me deep insights into the key factors which influence FDWs' and their families' choice of work destination for themselves and their mother, wife or daughter.

Aside from compensation, the legal protection afforded by the FDWs' host country plays an important role in these women's decision.

Although the payscale of FDWs in Singapore has not matched those of our neighbours such as Hong Kong and Taiwan, we continue to enjoy a steady inflow of these workers.

The emphasis that our Government places on the protection of migrant workers is a powerful attraction for source countries.

We must remember the symbiotic relationship that Singapore employers share with FDWs and the vital role FDWs play in supporting our economy and our ageing population.

Shirley Ng Chiou Peng (Ms)