Q

SINGAPORE

Kudos to NGOs that help Singapore's migrant workers



PUBLISHED ON **DECEMBER 18, 2016 3:00 PM**By **TOH YONG CHUAN AND JOANNA SEOW**

Migrant workers have been with us for centuries.

When modern Singapore was founded in 1819, migrants came here from across Asia to make a living - some returned home, others stayed on, as did many other migrants all over the world.

But only recently did the contributions of migrants get global recognition.

In 2000, the United Nations proclaimed Dec 18 as International Migrants Day.

On that day in 1990, a decade earlier, the UN adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The international treaty spells out protections for migrant workers and their families.

Since then, the day has been observed by countries in the world in various ways.

Singapore does not mark the day in a big way. There are no official events held around it and it does not appear on the diary of activities of the Ministry of Manpower (MOM).

However, a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are celebrating the day by acknowledging the contributions of migrant workers here.

These workers form a significant proportion of the Singapore population and labour force.

There are about 1.4 million foreign workers in Singapore, out of a workforce of 3.7 million and a population of 5.6 million.

This means that about one in four people here is a foreign worker. And about two in five workers here are foreigners.

The bulk of these foreign workers, about one million of them, are work-permit holders doing manual work, for example, as construction workers and maids.

Unlike top-rung foreign executives who come to Singapore on expatriate terms with their families in tow, those doing manual work receive low pay and live in dormitories or others' homes.

Without family support, they turn to non-governmental organisations for help when they run into problems.

NGOs say that the common problems these workers face are injuries related to work, salary and employment-related disputes and poor working conditions.

There are no official statistics on the number of foreign workers who die and are injured on the job, or those embroiled in disputes with their employers.

One of the oldest groups helping migrant workers is the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (ACMI). Commissioned as a ministry by the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Singapore in June 1998, ACMI has largely kept a low public profile.

The four big NGOs in the field are the Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC), Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (Home), Transient Workers Count Too (TWC2) and HealthServe.

The MWC is backed by the Government, the National Trades Union Congress and the Singapore National Employers Federation. It has the most resources in terms of manpower and funding.

Home has long been a champion for maids, offering training for them in vocational skills. It also runs the largest shelter for maids here.

TWC2, which runs a soup kitchen and provides shelter services, sees itself as a lobby group and advocate of migrant workers' rights.

HealthServe is the only NGO that provides low-cost medical and dental care for workers, besides running shelters and a soup kitchen.

Apart from these four big groups, there are several other smaller players in areas such as training and raising awareness of migrant workers' issues among university students.

Each of them fills a niche.

The MOM acknowledges the work of these NGOs. A ministry spokesman says: "The NGOs, together with many other stakeholders, such as the unions and employer associations, complement MOM's efforts to take care of the migrant workers."

On International Migrants Day today, Insight tells the stories of the NGOs that look after the welfare of these workers and speak up on their rights.

tohyc@sph.com.sg

joseow@sph.com.sg

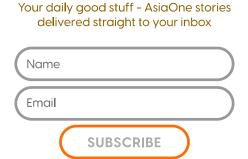
THE STRAITS TIMES

This article was first published on December 18, 2016. Get a copy of The Straits Times or go to <u>straitstimes.com</u> for more stories.

NGOS

Share this article





TRENDING

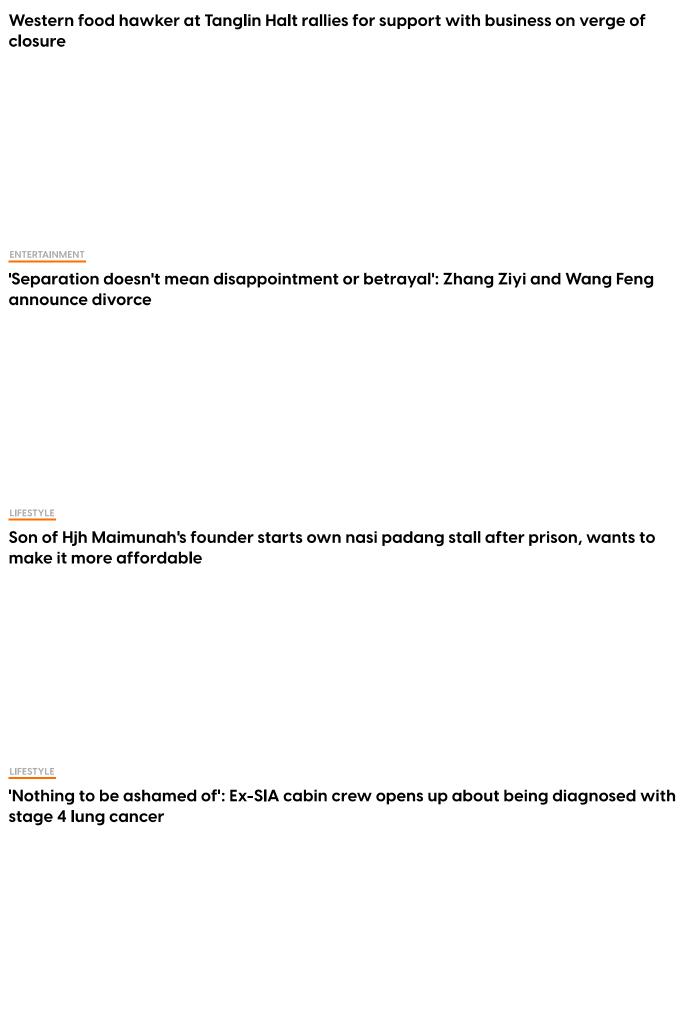


SINGAPORE

Couple gets a shock after seeing 18 'new faces' in Sengkang flat they rented out

LIFESTYLE

'It's very encouraging': Singaporeans touched by Gen Z canteen stall owner who gave out free bento boxes before closure



This made my day: Bugis hawker gives free meals to needy using diners' donations
MONEY 5-room HDB flat in Bukit Merah sold for record-breaking \$1.45m; block has produced 7 million-dollar flats
Police arrest woman seen throwing household items out window of Tanah Merah condo
Steven Lim shares more on Growing Up co-star's animosity, Jamie Yeo also became
'public enemy No. 2' on set
ENTERTAINMENT
'It's too cruel': Myolie Wu criticised for enjoying seafood cooked alive at table

ĺΝ			

Exposed: Telegram group circulates videos of people engaging in lewd acts around HDB estates

MALAYSIA

Man in Malaysia lives in car for 2 years to pay off \$280k debt

SINGAPORE

SEE MORE

SINGAPORE

'No dignity nor integrity': Customer disgusted after food delivery rider allegedly left wet bag on floor and 'ran away'

SINGAPORE

Traffic jam wasn't that bad, says couple who tried commuting from JB to Singapore for work every day

SINGAPORE

Right or wrong? Woman allegedly begs for money at Joo Chiat and uses it to place bet, sparking online debate

Economical or not? Case nas received 11 complaints on economy rice pricing since January
SINGAPORE 'Show the receipt': Hawker asks for proof after diner complains of \$8 bee hoon at SGH food court
SINGAPORE Woman pukes after finding uncooked pork in soup
SINGAPORE 'I was afraid cars would run over him': Elderly man collapses while crossing road in Toa Payoh, passers-by rush to his aid
SINGAPORE Woman, 71, 'puzzled and amused' after bus driver told her not to go to upper deck
SINGAPORE Govt to manage gas purchases, supply for power sector: Gan Kim Yong

SINGAPORE

Avoid collective punishment of a whole population: President Tharman on Israel-Hamas war

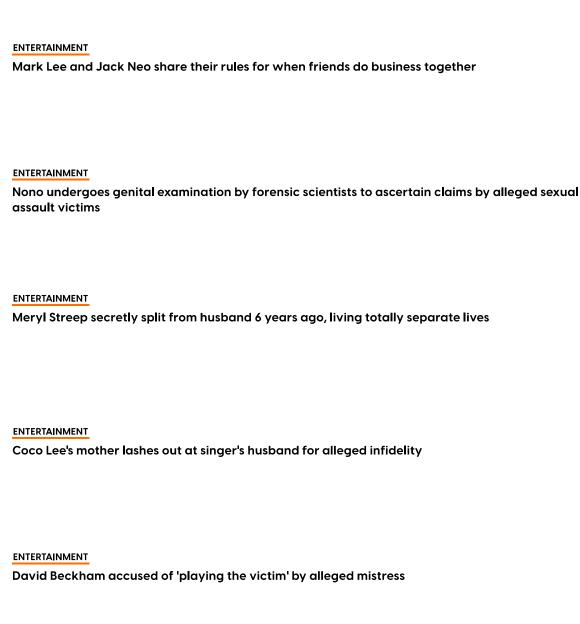
ENTERTAINMENT

SEE MORE

ENTERTAINMENT

Jeon So-min to leave Running Man after 6 years

Here's how you can get a photo with Thai idols Mile and Apo in Singapore at The M	/lagical ManSuang Asia Tour
---	-----------------------------



ENTERTAINMENT

Britney Spears was brutally dumped by Justin Timberlake with two-word text

ENTERTAINMENT

Prince William hails late Sir Bobby Charlton as a 'true great'

LIFESTYLE	SEE MORE
	OLL IVIOINE

LIFESTYLE

Influencer Larry Koh dies in his sleep, content creators flock online to pay tribute

LIFESTYLE

'Pitch black, silent and cold': Singaporean woman recounts solo hiking experience in South Korea

LIFESTYLE

Foreign woman recalls disaster first date with Singapore man, netizens apologise on behalf of nation

LIFESTYLE

Worries, uncertainty and burnout: 23-year-old SAJC canteen stall owner to close shop, plans food giveaway to clear remaining stock

LIFESTYLE

'There's nothing much going on here': Ghib Ojisan visits the most depressing neighbourhood in Singapore

LIFESTYLE

Updated Mercedes-Benz GLA here, starting at \$268,888

LIFESTYLE

Mercedes-AMG EQE 43 delivers refinement and performance in equal measures

LIFESTYLE

Mamma Mia! You will dance, jive, and have the time of your life

LIFESTYLE Halloween 2023: The spookiest bites, parties and events to haunt this year
LIFESTYLE I've lived at Casa Pasir Ris condo for 20 years: Here's my review of what it's like for families
DIGICULT
DIGICULT Oppo aims to make foldable smartphones mainstream with the launch of Find N3 and Find N3 Flip
DIGICULT From Spider-Man to Neopets: Try your hand at upcoming games and snag some freebies at Gamescom Asia 2023
DIGICULT Trailblazers, score yourselves some Honkai: Star Rail freebies at this pop-up cafe
DIGICULT Apple releases an affordable Pencil with USB-C charging DIGICULT
CEO of China's Weibo tests new real-name policy on his own account

	Elon Musk's X to launch premium subscriptions soon
	DIGICULT Nokia to cut up to 14,000 jobs as US demand shrinks, growth uncertain
	DIGICULT As Google pushes deeper into AI, publishers see fresh challenges
	DIGICULT Google to start manufacturing smartphones in India with Pixel 8
	WORLD Meta to limit some Facebook comments on Israeli, Palestinian posts
N	EY MONEY Bukit Timah penthouse sold for \$32m, seller pockets impressive \$16m profit
	MONEY 4-room Boon Keng flat with 'unblocked views of Kallang River' sold for over \$1.3m

MONEY

МО

Global billionaire tax could yield \$340b annually, study says

MONEY The realities of luxury property investment and why high-end homes don't always equal high returns
MONEY Are Singapore property prices finally slowing? Here's a snapshot of the property market in 2023 so far
MONEY Is one-north Singapore's next real estate investment hotspot? Here's the important points buyers need to consider
MONEY Right-sizing our 7% public transport fare hike
MONEY UOB Lady's Card: New design and rewards earn rates sweeten the deal for this revamped card
MONEY China to bolster economic recovery and curb risks according to central bank head
MONEY 5 cheapest 4-bedroom condo units under \$1.4m for bigger families
ADULTING SEE MORE

The challenge	of work-life balance: Youths in Singapore share how they care for their mental health
LIFESTYLE	
	ent generations view mental health? We asked a Gen Z, millennial and Gen X
	LIFESTYLE Navigating the job market as a fresh grad? Content creators share tips on how to land your dream job and salary
	LIFESTYLE
	'A client took 6 months to pay me': Influencer spills the tea on being a content creator in Singapore
	LIFESTYLE
	'Not sustainable for me in terms of mental and physical health': Ex-SIA cabin crew dishes out the ups and downs of the job
_{LIFESTYLE} Village life, 4-	day work week and long waits: Singaporean woman explains what life in Netherlands is like
LIFESTYLE	
Spending moi stingy'	re equals happiness? Singapore-based Malaysian responds to critics claiming budget meals are 'too
	LIFESTYLE
	Here's how NS prepares you for life after 'OWADIO'!
	LIFESTYLE
	'This is how a marriage should work': Gen Z couple's team effort in handling kids leaves netizens

impressed

FΝ	JTF	DT	Δι	NΝ	ΛF	NΤ

Noah Yap's new alien comedy-adventure, directed at youth who 'don't know our place in the universe', starts crowdfunding

EART	HONE	SEE MORE
	CHINA 3 listed Chinese firms used endangered animal parts as ingredients, repor	ts say
	WORLD El Nino to continue into mid-2024, threatening agriculture	
	WORLD UK police charge climate activist Greta Thunberg after protest	
WORLD Ships speeding	g through US 'go slow' zones meant to protect endangered whale: Report	
SINGAPORE 'Care about the emissions in Si	ne food that we're eating': Climate changemakers on disruptive solutions fo ngapore	or food security, carbor
	WORLD Amazon River falls to lowest in over a century amid Brazil drought	
	WORLD	

Global water cycle 'spinning out of balance': UN meteorological agency

WORLD
Swedish court fines Greta Thunberg again for disobeying police orders

WORLD

Global economic losses from extreme weather could hit \$6.8 trillion, Lloyd's says

WORLD

Deadly humid heat could hit billions, spread as far as US Midwest, study says

PROPERTY

SEE MORE

SINGAPORE

Couple gets a shock after seeing 18 'new faces' in Sengkang flat they rented out

SINGAPORE

Police arrest woman seen throwing household items out window of Tanah Merah condo

SINGAPORE

Exposed: Telegram group circulates videos of people engaging in lewd acts around HDB estates

LIFESTYLE

I've lived at Casa Pasir Ris condo for 20 years: Here's my review of what it's like for families

MONEY

MONEY Are Singapore	e property prices finally slowing? Here's a snapshot of the property market in 2023 so far
MONEY s one-north S	ingapore's next real estate investment hotspot? Here's the important points buyers need to consider
	LIFESTYLE 23 convenient condos with a fully-sheltered walk to the MRT station
	MONEY 5-room HDB flat in Bukit Merah sold for record-breaking \$1.45m; block has produced 7 million-dollar flats
	MONEY 5 cheapest 4-bedroom condo units under \$1.4m for bigger families
LATE	SEE MORE WORLD 'Bobi knows he's deeply loved': World's oldest dog dies at 31
	<u>WORLD</u> Daily roundup: Eric Chou lived at US homestay to improve his English, ended up teaching their kids Mandarin instead - and other top stories today

The realities of luxury property investment and why high-end homes don't always equal high

returns

WORLD Hamas says its fighters engaged Israeli force infiltrating Gaza
CHINA Boy in China throws up in class but teacher forces him to eat his vomit
ASIA Pakistan's Imran Khan indicted in official secrets case
WORLD Biden, key Western leaders urge Israel to protect civilians
ASIA Once disgraced, Indonesian ex-general tipped for presidency after makeover
<u>WORLD</u> Judge temporarily lifts Trump gag order in federal 2020 election case
ASIA Iran's quandary: How to stay out of Israel's war on Hamas

ENTERTAINMENT 'She embodies classic beauty': Joey Wong appears in Nanjing, mesmerising netizens CHINA 4 buns and cabbage leaf: Passenger puzzled by China Southern Airlines' in-flight meal ENTERTAINMENT 'We miss the food': Liza Wang and husband Law Kar Ying in Singapore WORLD Australian man squares up to 'monster' kangaroo trying to drown pet dog **ENTERTAINMENT** 'Female version of Edison Chen': Gillian Chung sparks romance rumours with influencer LIFESTYLE I ate only KOKA instant noodles for an entire day and here's what I learnt 'Thinner than my faith': Man in Malaysia gets paper-thin egg in RM1 nasi lemak

ASIA No jo

No joke: Thai woman goes into labour at mookata restaurant, insists she will return to finish food

CHINA

'I like it when you're chubby': China model gains 35kg in a month for boyfriend but gets dumped

This website is best viewed using the latest versions of web browsers.

AsiaOne Online Pte Ltd

About Us | Advertise With Us | Privacy Statement | Work With Us | Terms & Conditions

Available on GOOGLE PLAY

Available on
APPLE STORE

@asiaone 2023 Company Registration No.: 201815023K