

Agencies can play their part

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MAID agencies are obliged to monitor the progress of the workers they supply to employers.

Catherine Yeoh of Jenny Enterprise said that from time to time, they would call to find out how the maids are doing and the maids can also complain about the employers' behaviour.

There have been cases when maids complained about their employers calling them "stupid" and slapping them.

Some were also beaten up by the employers' children while others take advantage by asking the maids to help in renovation work on their houses. They were made to carry bricks and so on.

In such cases, the agents will tell the employers to stop doing it and resolve the matter amongst them.

In most cases, a cordial agreement could be reached. In worst-case scenarios, the maids will be sent to their home countries and the employers will be refused any further supply of maids from the particular agency.

G. Singh, a spokesman for

Speecomaju Sdn Bhd, said in every application the potential employers are asked about their financial standing.

They are also asked if they had employed maids before and if there had any record of frequent change of maids.

If the agency suspects that the frequency of maid change is attributed to the employer's behaviour, then the application is likely to be refused.

In most first-time applicants, there are no references, and so it is very difficult to gauge potential employers to ensure that they treat the maids well.

Eric Kam of Malindo Services said the maids under his agency are trained first and are reminded to keep in touch with the agency. Should their employer treat them unfairly, they are told not to run away. There has been some cases of those who ran away and this only made it more complicated because the maid's work permit had to be seen to.

Siti Rohani Abdul Majid, an exec-

utive with an engineering company, said: "Working mothers do not seem to have much choice but to get Indonesian maids from the agencies since they are more easily available."

Although she was quite moved by the newspaper report about the maid who was abused, Siti Rohani was not happy with her two previous Indonesian maids. They were young, had boyfriends and spent hours on the phone. They also dated boyfriends, leaving the employers' children on their own in the house.

There was nothing much that could be done but to report to the agency. However, before the maids could be returned to the agency, they ran away.

"Maintaining a maid is difficult. Sometimes I wish some companies such like the one I work for would have daycare centres so that working mothers will not be too reliant on a maid to look after the children," she added. — **By Tahir Ismail**