

Abused maid tried to escape several times

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KUALA LUMPUR: Abused Indonesian maid Siti Hajar had tried to escape from her employer several times in the past three years.

However, each attempt was thwarted by her employer, who then assaulted and abused her further.

Her employer, a 43-year-old agent dealing with foreign maids, was arrested on Monday and remanded for five days to facilitate investigations.

Siti, who was warded at the University Malaya Medical Centre here, said she could not bear the torture any longer after she was scalded on Sunday.

"I am usually the target when my employer has prob-

lems.

"She is a divorcee with a 11-year-old son and a 13-year-old daughter," she said.

"Despite the abuse I underwent, I never took it out on her children.

"I, too, am a divorcee with two children. My children are being taken care of by my parents in Garut, West Java."

Siti alleged she only slept three hours daily and breakfast and dinner usually consisted of plain rice and water.

She said she was assaulted for stealing vegetables several times after she could not stomach the plain rice.

"She would somehow find out I stole the vegetables and for that I would be beaten up."

Seated in a wheelchair, Siti then broke down and said all she wanted now was to go



Siti Hajar claims she was not only abused but also given plain rice to eat

home and hug her children.

"Maybe I will return to Malaysia later to work. I know not all employers are like my former boss," she said.

Siti escaped from her employer's Lanai Kiara Condominium in Mont Kiara and hid in some bushes. At sunrise, she boarded a taxi to the Indonesian Embassy.

After hearing her story, embassy officials contacted Siti's employer who turned up with a friend. She was then handed over to the police.

Meanwhile, an Indonesian embassy official said Siti's family in West Java had been informed and they had requested that the matter be settled quickly.

Give them day off, urges unionist

KUALA LUMPUR: The Malaysian Trades Union Congress (MTUC) wants the government to declare a compulsory weekly day off for domestic workers to enable them to go to the Labour Department in case they need to report any mistreatment.

Referring to the case of Indonesian maid Siti Hajar who claimed she was abused by her employer for the past three years, MTUC secretary-general G. Rajasekaran said this measure must be taken due to rising reports of abuse and inhumane treatment of foreign domestic workers.

"Compelling domestic workers to work 16 hours a day, seven days a week and 365 days a year is not illegal."

Rajasekaran said this group of workers, numbering more than 300,000 in the country, were also not entitled to any legal protection.

"The only protection the workers have is that they can

go to the Labour Department to complain about non-payment of monthly salaries, but without a weekly day off they are denied free movement."

He urged the Human Resources Ministry not to turn a blind eye to these reports as thousands of foreign domestic workers were made to endure beatings, poor living conditions and suffer in silence.

Siti Hajar, 33, from West Java, who allegedly could no longer stand the abuse, fled from her employer's residence in Lanai Kiara Condominium, Mount Kiara, on Monday.

She also claimed she had not been paid any salary since her employment and was owed RM17,000.

The Indonesian ambassador, Tan Sri Da'i Bactiar, told reporters on Monday that Siti Hajar was not only allegedly beaten but also only fed plain rice and occasionally with pork. — Bernama