

WORKING IN *Singapore*

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AN INTERVIEW WITH *The Familiar Strangers*

Familiar Strangers is a campaign by four students from Nanyang Technological University (NTU) to collect and share stories of foreign workers in Singapore. By providing them with a platform to tell their stories—in their own words, through photos and videos—Familiar Strangers hopes to give readers an opportunity to learn more about the lives of foreign workers here.

The students were inspired to work on the project when they realised there was no platform where they could understand the stories and lives of the foreign workers. They also saw foreign workers as friends who are in similar pursuit of a better life for themselves and their families. Through Familiar Strangers, it is hoped that the gap can be bridged when they get to write and tell their stories through first-person narratives.

When approached, the foreign workers had plenty to share about their lives, even though they could not speak English well. They shared their dreams, aspirations, and motivations for working here. Some even wrote poems to express themselves.

The project also revealed how talented some of the foreign workers were, and how many were degree holders who worked here simply because they either could not find a job back home, or the pay there is insufficient to support their family. At the end of the day, Familiar Strangers' goal was for Singaporeans to see foreign workers as individuals who are just like us; people who have dreams and want to provide a better life for their loved ones.

In parting words of encouragement, the team behind Familiar Strangers expressed their gratitude, saying: "To our foreign worker friends, there are many Singaporeans who recognise that the work you do is tough, and we appreciate your contributions to our country."

EXCERPTS OF THE REFLECTION PIECES FROM SOME FWS.

我是一个外国工人，来新打工赚多点新币回家
好让父母孩子过得好一点，也让自己的辛勤劳动
给新加坡添砖加瓦，让新加坡花园城市
更加美丽。有机会让他们的子孙，来新旅
游。



"I'd like my grandchildren to come for a holiday."

— Zhou Xing Hu, 41, China, hopes to make a little contribution to Singapore, and to beautify this Garden City. If he has the chance, he would like to bring his children and grandchildren to Singapore for a holiday.

But official language is English. without english very difficult to live here.

I have a story about english. when new come here. I don't know how to speak properly. But oneday my site supervisor tell me bring hammer but I bring spade. For that, our communication going to be a problem. After that I have realized fore work communication is very important. if each other communication is not good so we, can not work properly.



"My site supervisor tell me bring hammer but I bring spade..."

— Islam, 29, Bangladesh, on his lack of knowledge of English and the importance of being able to communicate with his supervisor at work.



BRINGING MORE *FW Ambassadors on Board*

Over the past two years, the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has conducted workshops to educate more than 800 Foreign Worker (FW) Ambassadors on employment regulations, FWs' employment rights and responsibilities, and social norms. The workshops marked the start of a special journey that these Ambassadors would take together with MOM to help other FWs

who may need advice on employment-related issues as they live and work in Singapore. The Ambassadors were nominated by their dormitories. They are eager to help fellow FWs, and as Ambassadors they have now taken on mentoring roles to guide and help new FWs and their peers.

On 16 September 2016, a group of Ambassadors joined MOM to conduct a recruitment exercise at Homestay Residences

to invite more FWs to come on board. The Ambassadors helped MOM to select suitable FWs who had the potential to become FW Ambassadors. We were energised by the Ambassadors' enthusiasm in reaching out to their fellow workers. With their help, 43 new Ambassadors have now come on board, and we look forward to partnering them to reach out to even more FWs!



An FW Ambassador recruiting like-minded FWs who expressed interest in becoming an Ambassador.



FWs who "passed" the first round attended a briefing on employment regulations and social norms.



MOM officers chatted with FWs who had been shortlisted to better understand their motivations and aspirations of becoming an FW Ambassador.

BANGLADESHI CONSTRUCTION WORKER *Turned Poet*



Md Mukul Hussain, 26, was born in Patgram, Bangladesh. He first came to Singapore in 2008, and he is currently working in the construction sector.

Mukul likes to write poems whenever he misses his mother back home. He recently published a book of poems entitled "Me Migrant". The collection of poems is the voice of hope and inclusiveness, of longing and dreams, of service and heart; all from the viewpoint of a foreign worker. According to Mukul, the poems aim to make readers "see further, think deeper, and listen better". The poems have been translated into English for the benefit of non-Bengali readers.

Mukul hopes that his poetry can challenge the sometimes-negative perceptions that Singaporeans have of foreign

workers. Through his poems, he hopes that Singaporeans would be able to appreciate the resilience of the foreign workers who have left their families behind so that they can earn more money and create a better future for their families. He is now working on a book of short stories, and he hopes that one day he can tell his father that he is a famous writer.

Working in Singapore warmly congratulates Mukul on the publication of his book of poems, and wishes Mukul success for his next book!



"Me Migrant" is available on the Ethos Books website at www.ethosbooks.com.sg and is priced at \$12.

ADVISORY ON UNAPPROVED HOUSING *for Foreign Workers*

You are entitled to live in approved housing while working in Singapore. If you find yourself living in poor housing conditions, please raise the issue to your employer. Otherwise, report or seek help from MOM.

BELOW ARE OUR GUIDELINES ON APPROVED HOUSING:

A IF YOU STAY IN HOUSING DEVELOPMENT BOARD (HDB) FLATS



NUMBER OF OCCUPANTS IN A 3-ROOM FLAT

1-6

NUMBER OF OCCUPANTS IN A 4-ROOM OR BIGGER FLAT

1-9

Note: Arrange with your employer to find alternative accommodation if the number of occupants in a flat exceeds the quota.

B IF YOU STAY IN PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL UNITS

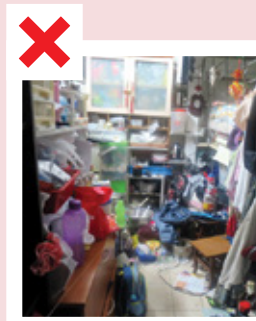
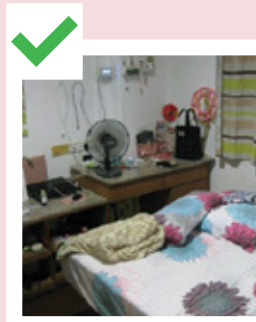
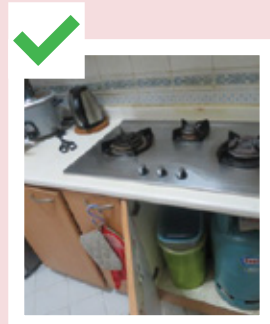
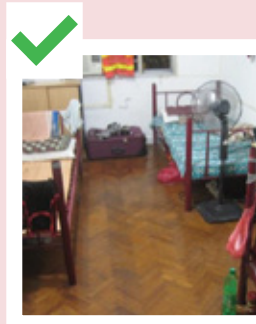


NUMBER OF OCCUPANTS IN A UNIT

1-8

Note: Arrange with your employer to find alternative accommodation if the number of occupants in a unit exceeds eight.

KEEP YOUR ACCOMMODATION CLEAN AND TIDY. A DIRTY AND OVERCROWDED ACCOMMODATION AFFECTS YOUR HEALTH AND SAFETY.



If your accommodation looks like this, contact MOM at 6438 5122.

If you look for your own accommodation or change your accommodation at any time, you must **inform your employer of your latest residential address** so that they can inform MOM. If you fail to do so, your work pass may be revoked and you will not be allowed to come back to Singapore for work.

GOOD PRACTICES TO ADOPT *in your Dormitory*

The Ministry of Manpower (MOM) has observed common bad practices related to housekeeping, electrical safety, and hygiene while conducting our compliance audits on Factory Converted Dormitories (FCDs). We encourage dormitory operators to eliminate threats to workers' safety, health, and welfare by adopting the following practices.

REGULARLY CLEAN FOOD STORAGE, CONSUMPTION, AND DISPOSAL AREAS TO PREVENT PEST INFESTATION



ENSURE THAT WORKERS' ROOMS ARE NOT OVERCROWDED



CHECK THAT POWER POINTS ARE NOT OVERLOADED

Excessive usage of multi-purpose plugs can lead to overheating and fires



PROVIDE SUFFICIENT AND CLEAN SANITARY FACILITIES THAT ARE IN PROPER WORKING CONDITION

Operators should provide at least one water closet, one hand wash basin, one urinal, and one bathroom with bench for every 15 workers. This is in line with the Code of Practice for Environmental Health (COPEH).



ADVISORY

No More 2G Services from 1 April 2017



The three telecommunication companies – M1, Singtel and StarHub – will cease their 2G mobile services from 1 April 2017.

To ensure that you will continue to enjoy the seamless provision of mobile services, the Info-communications Media Development Authority of Singapore (IMDA) recommends doing the following:



1 Do not use 2G mobile phones! Upgrade to 3G/4G mobile phone now!

- ▶ 2G-only phones are not usable from 1 April 2017
- ▶ Approach your service provider or mobile phone manufacturer now to find out if your current or new mobile phone supports at least 3G



2 Decide if you want data services

- ▶ You can surf the Internet, or use social media applications like Facebook, YouTube, Skype, WhatsApp etc with a 3G/4G mobile device
- ▶ If you do not want to use any of these services, contact your service provider to disable your data access and turn off the mobile data function on your mobile phone
- ▶ If you are using these services, do make sure your current mobile subscription plan comes with a data bundle

Brought to you by



ADVISORY

FOR FOREIGN WORKERS



ADVISORY FOR FOREIGN WORKERS ON TERRORISM

In April 2016, the Internal Security Department detained eight foreign workers from Bangladesh for their involvement in terrorism-related activities. This is the second incident since the arrest of another group of foreign workers last year.

Foreigners are welcome to work and live in Singapore as long as they abide by our laws. They must ensure that their activities do not jeopardise Singapore's safety and security.

The Singapore Government will not condone any form of support for terrorism. Our security agencies will take firm and decisive action against any person, regardless of nationality, who engages in any activity in support of terrorism.

You should inform the authorities if you come across any persons who show support for or participate in terrorism-related activities. You can help by looking out for persons who behave as follows:

- Talks about the need to carry out armed jihad or to overthrow a government through the use of violence
- Praises and supports terrorist groups such as the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) and Al-Qaeda
- Raises or donates money to support terrorist groups or their leaders
- Wants to travel to Syria, Iraq or Libya to join terrorist groups like ISIS
- Wants to make a bomb or obtain weapons (e.g. knives, guns, etc.)
- Owns and shares pro-jihad or pro-ISIS/terrorist material with other people
- Supports violent acts against people of other religious faiths

If you know or suspect anyone who shows any of the above behaviour, you should immediately inform the Internal Security Department (1800-2626-473) or the Police (999).



Be Harmonious and Inclusive at Work!



BROUGHT TO YOU BY

Community Engagement Programme

HARMONIOUS • INCLUSIVE • RESILIENT

Are you a victim?

ARRIVAL
Singapore! The start of a new job!

Why hasn't my salary been paid?

You should be paid your basic monthly salary every month and within 7 days after the end of the salary period. If your employer owes you salary, please report to MOM early.

HOME SWEET HOME REPUTATION COMPANY
Sending us back without salary!

Your employer cannot forcibly send you back if he has not settled your salary or any of your claims.

Excuse me, can you help me?

OFFICER

Thanks MOM for the help!

You should approach the airport authorities if your employer attempts to send you home forcibly without settling any of your salary or claims.

MOM will render you assistance in your claims.

Don't be a victim. MOM can help you.

Call us at 6438 5122 or walk in to MOM Services Centre, 1500 Bendemeer Road.



Filing a work injury claim with MOM is simple



If you are injured and need assistance with your work injury compensation, MOM can help you. Majority of work injury claims are settled within 3-6 months. For workers with serious injuries, more time may be needed.

We are located at MOM Services Centre, 1500 Bendemeer Road, Singapore 339946
Opening hours from Monday to Friday: 8.00am to 5.30pm
Website: <http://www.mom.gov.sg/wic>
Tel: 6438 5122



What is the difference between claiming work injury compensation under WICA and Common Law?



What you should know about claiming work injury compensation under WICA and Common Law

Work Injury Compensation Act	Common Law
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only need to show injury was due to work • Compensation amount depends on age, wages and extent of injury • No need to engage a lawyer. MOM can help you 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to prove employer / 3rd party was at fault • No limit to compensation, but has to justify the amount deserved before the Courts • May need to get a lawyer as Ministry is not part of this court process

If you need assistance, MOM can help you.
Location: MOM Services Centre, 1500 Bendemeer Road, Singapore 339946
Opening Hours: Monday - Friday, 8.00am to 5.30pm
Website: <http://www.mom.gov.sg/wic>
Tel: 6438 5122



DETERRENCE

UNLICENSED EMPLOYMENT AGENT CONVICTED and Fined \$30,000!

Najmul, a Bangladeshi worker, approached another Bangladeshi worker, Ali Md Somon, to look for a job in Singapore for his cousin. He paid \$7,500 to Ali as an agency fee, even though Ali did not hold a valid employment agency (EA) licence issued by MOM to do recruitment or other EA activities.

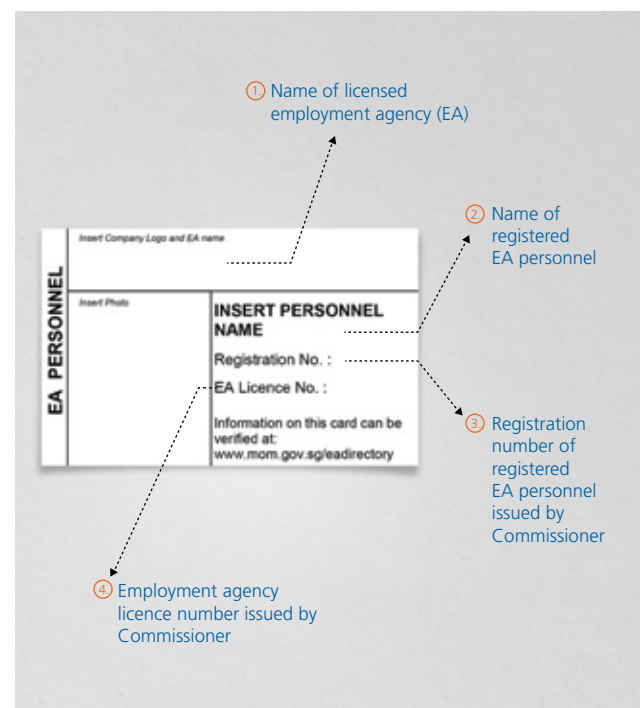
However, Najmul's cousin was unable to come to Singapore as his in-principle approval (IPA) document was cancelled, and Ali refused to refund the \$7,500 that Najmul had paid. Najmul thus approached the Ministry of Manpower (MOM) for help.

Ali was investigated by MOM and subsequently charged and convicted in Court in July 2016 for performing unlicensed EA activities

without a valid licence. He was sentenced to a fine of \$30,000 or six weeks' imprisonment, if he could not pay the fine.

It is an offence for anyone to perform any EA activity without a valid EA licence. Anyone found guilty of performing unlicensed EA activities can be fined a maximum of \$80,000 or jailed for up to two years, or both.

It is also an offence to use the services of an unlicensed EA, and anyone who does so can be punished with a \$5,000 fine. So if you require someone to help you with employment for yourself or your friends, please ensure that he is licensed by MOM and holds a valid EA registration card.



A sample of the EA registration card

UNsung CITY BUILDERS

In Commemoration of International Migrants Day

What do Gardens by the Bay, Changi Airport T4, Housing Development Board (HDB) flats and Esplanade have in common?

These iconic Singapore landmarks were constructed by foreign workers (FWs), who have played significant roles in shaping our beautiful city skyline. On 18 December 2016, we paid tribute to these unsung city builders when we celebrated International Migrants Day.



Proudly posing at the waterfall in the Cloud Forest at **Gardens by the Bay**, Chandrarasu, an Indian FW, said,

"I helped to build every layer of this! We took about one month but it felt shorter with the company of my friends."

At a sneak preview of the new **Changi Airport Terminal 4**, Zhiqiang, a Chinese FW told us why he chose to work in Singapore.

"Besides making a living, I also wanted to experience a new country. I like Singapore because it is safe."



Malaiselvam, an Indian FW, was humble and unassuming when recounting his experience working on the new **HDB flats** in Punggol.

"I started out as a general worker. But my boss felt I had potential and let me learn architectural checking on this project. I am very thankful for this chance to pick up a new skill."



Subbaiah, an Indian FW, shared with us his favourite moment while working on the **Esplanade – Theatres on the Bay**.

"I remember seeing fireworks during the National Day parade rehearsals! It was a beautiful sight and I will remember that for a very long time."

