



MINISTRY OF  
MANPOWER



URBAN  
REDEVELOPMENT  
AUTHORITY

### Joint MOM-URA Media Release

3 April 2018

#### **MANAGING DIRECTOR CHARGED WITH ABETMENT OF HOUSING OFFENCES AND UNAUTHORISED USE OF PRIVATE RESIDENTIAL PREMISES**

On 3 April 2018, the Ministry of Manpower (“MOM”) charged a 53-year-old woman, Zhou Fengxing (“Zhou”), in the State Courts for abetting an employer to house foreign workers in overcrowded private residential premises.

2 Zhou faces 21 charges under the Employment of Foreign Manpower Act (EFMA). If convicted, she could be fined up to \$10,000, or imprisoned for up to 12 months or both, for each charge. Zhou’s company, Sino Star Enterprise Pte Ltd<sup>1</sup> (“Sino Star”), also faces the same number of charges under the EFMA.

3 The Urban Redevelopment Authority (“URA”) has also charged Zhou and Sino Star for changing the use of three private residential units to workers’ dormitories without planning permission, and for abetment.

4 Zhou and Sino Star each face three charges of unauthorised change of use of private residential units under the Planning Act, and two charges of abetting the unauthorised change of use of private residential units. If convicted, Zhou and Sino Star could be fined up to \$200,000 per charge.

## National Archives of Singapore

### About the Case

5 The case was uncovered as part of MOM’s proactive enforcement efforts against foreign worker housing offences. Investigations revealed that Sino Star was the master tenant of several units at a residential apartment located in Geylang. From March to July 2015, Zhou gave consent for Sino Star to sublet one unit to an employer to house a total of 21 foreign workers. The unit had exceeded URA’s prevailing occupancy cap of eight persons<sup>2</sup>. Apart from illegal partitions found within, there was overcrowding in the unit, given the large number of occupants. This resulted in extremely unsanitary conditions which compromised the well-being of the workers.

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<sup>1</sup> Zhou is the managing director of Sino Star, which is in the business of arranging accommodation for foreign workers and students.

<sup>2</sup> The occupancy cap was eight persons at the time when URA investigated the case. It was revised to six persons in February 2017.

6 Following MOM's inspections conducted at the said residential unit, we ordered the employer to promptly relocate all affected workers. All the workers were moved out to a purpose-built dormitory within two weeks from the date the directive was issued.

7 The cases against Zhou and Sino Star have been adjourned to 24 April 2018 for a Further Mention.

### **Advisory from MOM and URA**

8 Under the Employment of Foreign Manpower (Work Passes) Regulations, employers are required to provide accommodation for their foreign workers which comply with the various statutory requirements. Employers who contravene any of the conditions of the work pass will be guilty of an offence under Section 22(1)(a) of the EFMA. On top of penalties imposed by the Court, MOM will also bar errant employers from employing foreign workers. MOM will also take firm action against errant property owners or tenants who fraudulently entered into subletting arrangements with employers that resulted in overcrowding conditions for the foreign workers.

9 Under URA's regulations, private residential properties are currently subject to an occupancy cap of six unrelated persons. All occupants must also fulfil a minimum stay duration of three consecutive months. Property owners should exercise due diligence to ensure that their properties are not used by their tenants for unauthorised purposes.

### **Report Poor Foreign Worker Accommodation**

10 MOM urges foreign workers who have issues with their accommodation to first raise the matter to their employer. If their employers fail to make improvements to the living conditions, they should immediately seek advice and assistance from the Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC) at 6536 2692 or report the matter to MOM at 6438 5122.

11 Members of the public can also play a part by informing the authorities of persons or employers who contravene the EFMA, or refer foreign workers in distress to MOM at 6438 5122 or e-mail [mom\\_fmmd@mom.gov.sg](mailto:mom_fmmd@mom.gov.sg). All information will be kept strictly confidential.

*End of Release*

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