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Indonesia seeks justice for abused migrant worker

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The Indonesian government is striving to attain justice for the family of Adelina Lisao, an Indonesian migrant worker from East Nusa Tenggara (NTT) who died after reportedly being tortured by her employer in Penang, Malaysia, a minister has said.

Adelina, 21, died at Bukit Mer-tajam Hospital in Penang on Sunday after allegedly suffering from abuse at the hands of her employer for more than one month. Adelina was reportedly not provided with food and was forced to sleep outside with her employer's rottweiler.

Foreign Minister Retno LP Marsudi said she had coordinated with the Indonesian Embassy in Malaysia and the Indonesian Consulate

General in Penang to demand justice and compensation for the deceased migrant worker's family.

"The Consulate General will provide assistance to ensure the [victim's] rights are upheld, particularly her family's right to obtain compensation or remedial justice," Retno said on Tuesday.

"What happened [to Adelina] cannot be accepted," she added.

Retno further explained that the Malaysian authorities had moved to investigate the case. Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng also sent a letter of condolence to Indonesia on Monday.

Adelina was seen sitting on the porch of her employers' house on Saturday, with swelling to her head and face as well as burns on her arms and legs. She appeared too terrified to respond to would-

be rescuers.

Malaysian authorities have detained Adelina's employer, a 36-year-old woman, and the latter's mother, 60, and older brother, 39, for allegedly abusing Adelina.

Adelina's death has added to the long list of deaths among migrant workers from NTT, with 62 people recorded to have died in Malaysia in 2017 alone, according to Migrant CARE data.

Agency for the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers (BNP2TKI) deputy chairman Teguh Hendro Cahyono said his agency had continued to communicate with Adelina's family in NTT to investigate the agents that might have recruited her.

"Adelina obtained work in Malaysia through an illegal agent. Many agents manage to lure peo-

ple by offering a shorter bureaucracy process. They only require a one-week waiting time before a job seeker is dispatched," he said.

Teguh said illegal agents could deploy workers with fake documents such as falsified passports to hide the workers' real age.

Adelina had worked in Malaysia since 2014, which meant she was only 17 when she was dispatched to the country.

"Prevailing Malaysian policies require domestic helpers to be at least 21 years old," Teguh said.

"Many Indonesian job seekers only obtain fake passports and tourist visas to gain employment there. They are subject to criminalization by Malaysian authorities and it is difficult for them to seek protection from the Indonesian embassy. When something

bad happens to them they don't know where to go."

The Malaysian foreign domestic helper policy also requires employers go through a certification process, in which they must show evidence of a monthly net income of at least RM 3,000 (US\$760.86) and have children under 15 years of age or ill parents who require care.

"Employers who are not eligible according to these requirements can easily hire helpers from illegal agents," Teguh said.

Migrant CARE executive director Wahyu Susilo expressed suspicion that the illegal deployment of Indonesians seeking work abroad was aided by corrupt officials.

"Corruption and graft surrounding the issuance of fake documents are age old tales in Indonesia, especially in NTT," he

said, adding that Adelina's papers mentioned three different addresses located in NTT and Medan in North Sumatra.

However, efforts to end illegal recruitment have all ended in failure. "A police officer was criminalized by his own supervisor for investigating a human trafficking syndicate in NTT," Wahyu said.

He referred to Brig. Rudi Soik who was fired from the police and sentenced to four months' imprisonment following his investigation into 52 human trafficking cases in the province in 2015.

Wahyu said the government's commitment to protecting Indonesian migrant workers would not end with the desired results if they did not battle corruption among officials who made human trafficking possible. (gis)