

MOM wants all stakeholders to help ensure workplace safety, health

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SINGAPORE — Soon, it may take just a piece of negligence, instead of the more serious offence of a wilful or reckless act, for the law to come down on those who endanger safety and health at the workplace. That is what the Ministry of

Manpower (MOM) is now proposing — one of three broad areas under law it is seeking to amend

The aim, MOM said yesterday, is to ensure that all stakeholders play their part in ensuring safety and health outcomes.

The Ministry also wants anyone who engages a contractor

or subcontractor for specialised tasks or the services of workers from third-party labour suppliers to have a duty to ensure the safety and health of the contractor and his workers. This includes ensuring the competence of the contractor hired.

MOM announced the proposals

yesterday, as it began a consultation process to amend the Workplace Safety and Health Act.

Apart from extending the legislation to all workplaces, which the Ministry had intended since last March, another possible change is to narrow the definition of “factory” to work premises whose activities present a higher potential for accidents.

For example, workplaces which handle goods or hazardous substances and those that repair or build vessels or vehicles. The operation of public utilities is also included.

Workplaces deemed to be factories under the Act would be subject to stricter regulations. Owners of these operations will need to notify or register with MOM before commencing operations.

The current definition of “factory” was “deliberately crafted broadly” to give the Ministry flexibility in its regulatory oversight. But since the Act is being extended to cover all workplaces, there is no longer a need for such a broad definition.

The third change is to give MOM more powers to investigate instances of diseases arising from exposure to risk factors at work and to expand the definition of “occupation disease” to include “all diseases arising from exposures to biological and chemical agents at work”.

This way, action can be taken against any such lapses at the workplace.

The legislative changes are expected to take effect by September. The public can give feedback on the Reach website, at www.reach.gov.sg.



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From left are, Dr Kannathal Natrajan, Mr Collin Tan, Dr Rajendra Archarya and Mr Tan Jen Hong. TODAY FILE PHOTO

A faster way to screen patients for tuberculosis

SINGAPORE — Screening for tuberculosis (TB) involves several time-consuming procedures.

But researchers from Ngee Ann Polytechnic's School of Engineering and SATA CommHealth have invented a faster method to detect the disease.

Using a software programme, it will take just minutes as the texture of the lungs in X-rays is analysed.

Dr Rajendra Acharya, from Ngee Ann Poly's Diploma in Biomedical Engineering programme, said the new method is fast when compared with the current method where culture tests are done on the patient and the radiologist has to examine all the X-rays.

The team says it has achieved a 90 per cent success

rate in accurately detecting the incidence of TB in patients since they started their research in November.

It hopes to achieve a 100 per cent success rate in about one-and-a-half years. SATA CommHealth's Diagnostic Imaging Services Manager, Mr Collin Tan, hopes this new computer-aided tool would help to improve the efficiency of radiologists.

He said: "Currently, we are doing around 16,000 chest X-rays per month and we have only two radiologists reporting chest X-rays.

With this tool, we hope it would help radiologists filter out suspected TB cases and improve their productivity."

VIMITA MOHANDAS