

## HOT NEWS

# Trial resumes for former Romanian diplomat accused of hit-and-run

BUCHAREST — The trial of former Romanian diplomat Silviu Ionescu, who is accused of manslaughter after two hit-and-run accidents in Singapore, resumed yesterday in Bucharest.

For the first time, the defence team and the accused saw surveillance footage from the night of the accident, which showed a dark-coloured car running down

a pedestrian who was crossing the street.

But it was not possible to make out the licence plate number or the driver's face.

The car was seen driving away from the crash after the driver failed to get out to check on the victim.

The videos shown in court were from cameras mounted at the junction of Bukit Panjang and Pending Road.

Ionescu is accused of hitting three pedestrians in two separate accidents on Dec 15, 2009.

The car he was allegedly driving at the time belonged to the Romanian mission in Singapore, but he has repeatedly denied that he was the driver and has said that the car had been stolen.

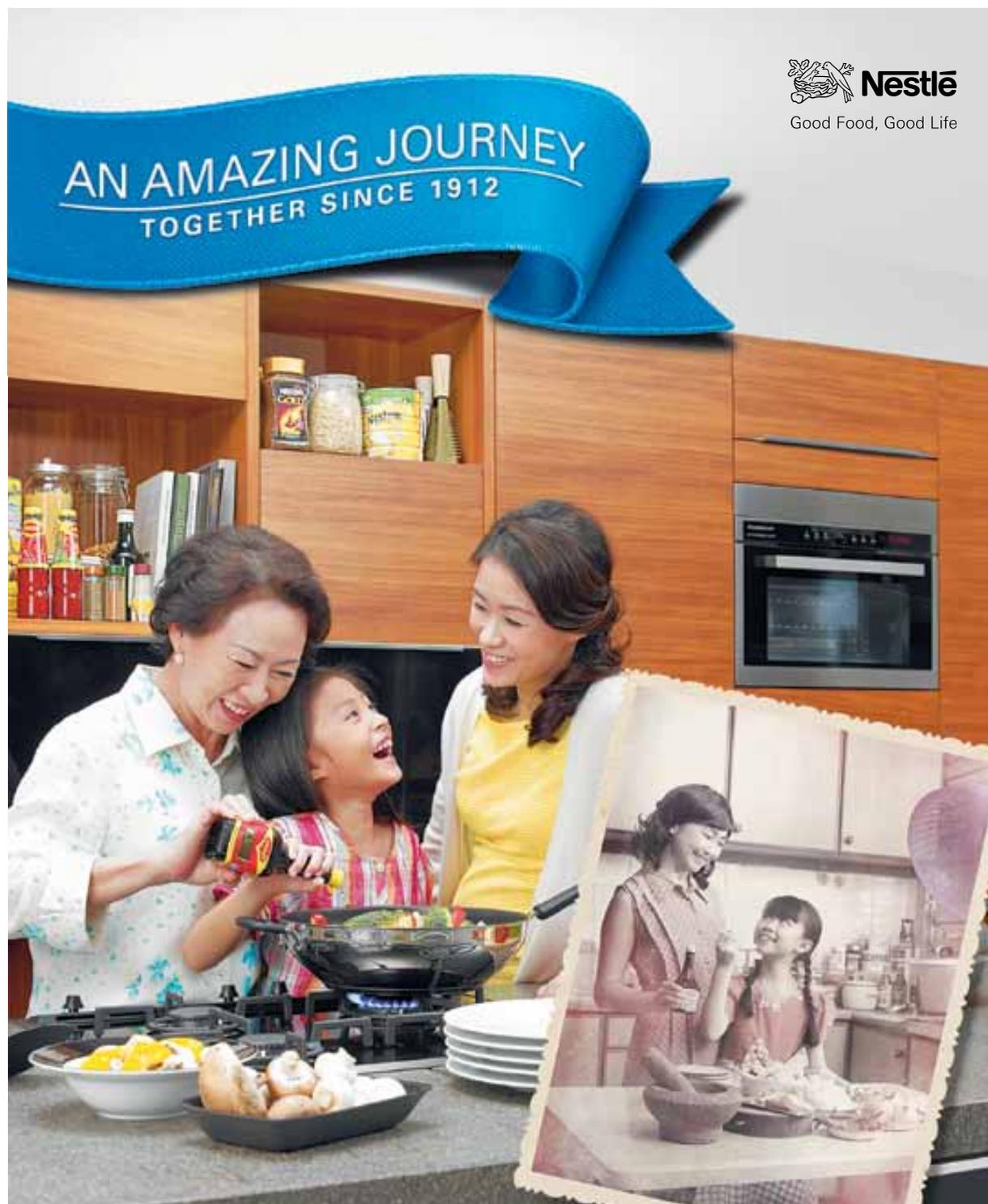
The court also heard yesterday three

audio recordings in which Ionescu informed the 999 emergency service of the embassy car's disappearance.

The trial will resume on Wednesday, when two defence witnesses will be heard.

Several Singaporean witnesses will then be heard on May 18 via video link.

CHANNEL NEWSASIA



## Have clearer guidelines on mandatory day off, say maid agencies

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SINGAPORE — Maid agencies are calling for clearer guidelines on the mandatory weekly day off for foreign domestic workers to ensure the smooth introduction of the law next year. They also believe there should be a mediation mechanism for disputes.

Under the new regulation, employers and their maids will have to mutually agree on which day the rest day should be. However, the agencies feel that more clarity is needed on the definition of a rest day.

"If the domestic helper follows the employer on weekends for a picnic for the whole day, is that considered a rest?" wondered Best Home Employment Agency director Tay Khoon Beng.

"These guidelines must be provided to us so that we can explain to the helpers the definition of rest."

The new law is also silent on how many hours make up a maid's rest day. And there may be differing expectations, according to Mr Jeremy Khoo, executive director of the Archdiocesan Commission for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People.

"From our experience, for current domestic workers who get a weekly or monthly day off, it is usually between eight and 10 hours. They usually go out at about 8am or 9am and have to go back home at 5pm," he said.

"It'll (be) good for the Manpower Ministry to have a clear set of guidelines so that there's no unhappiness among both parties."

Besides seeking a clearer definition of a rest day, employment agencies want guidelines on how to deal with disputes and hope they will be involved

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**Mr Tay Khoon Beng, director of Best Home Employment Agency**

in any mediation mechanism.

Mr Gary Chin, managing director of Nation Employment, cited an example of a maid who initially agrees to work for compensation in lieu of some of her rest days.

"After some time, both parties may have a change of ideas. The maid might want to withdraw from the original agreement (and) have the day off. So, disputes will happen," he said.

"(But) who should the employers or the maids turn to for mediation? In the new regulations, it's stated that we're not supposed to interfere."

Despite their call for guidelines, the agencies agree that flexibility is also needed when employers and maids negotiate in order to maintain a harmonious relationship.

They also said that from next year, they will be stricter in their selection criteria for foreign domestic workers, to ensure they bring in those who are serious about working in Singapore.

They hope this will help to allay employers' concerns about the social implications of the new law.

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