

# TODAY

qgl.e\_nmpe

## New rules for larger foreign worker dorms could be introduced 'in a few months'



*SINGAPORE — New regulations for operators of larger foreign worker dormitories could be introduced in a few months, Acting Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin said yesterday.*

**BY AMIR HUSSAIN - APRIL 21**

SINGAPORE — New regulations for operators of larger foreign worker dormitories could be introduced in a few months, Acting Manpower Minister Tan Chuan-Jin said yesterday.

While the minister declined to reveal what aspects would be regulated, those involved in a two-hour dialogue with him and his ministry on Thursday told TODAY they discussed areas such as provision of social activities for foreign workers, health standards as well as safety.

Speaking to reporters on the sidelines of the official opening of Westlite Mandai dormitory, Mr Tan said the new regulatory framework was part of ongoing efforts to better manage and look after foreign workers in Singapore.

The dialogue on Thursday involved key players in the foreign worker dormitory sector, such as the Dormitory Association of Singapore (DAS), the Singapore Contractors Association and the Port of Singapore Authority.

DAS president Kelvin Teo told TODAY discussions were still at a "very initial stage" and that they were centred on "uplifting the standards" at dormitories.

Calls for more to be done to meet the social needs of migrant workers and for their dormitories to have better amenities grew louder in the aftermath of the Little India riot on Dec 8. Some civil society activists pointed to poor living conditions at foreign worker dormitories as one of several sources of discontent that boiled over that night, although several witnesses who testified at the Committee of Inquiry, which was set up to look into the cause of the incident, said foreign workers were generally happy working here.

Yesterday, Mr Tan toured the 11,265 sqm Westlite Mandai, which can house up to 6,300 workers, before joining the dormitory's management and residents in a short futsal match.

The joint development by construction company Lian Beng Group and dormitory developer Centurion Corporation is the first dormitory to comply with revised amenity provision guidelines for workers' dormitories, which the Urban Redevelopment Authority had implemented in February 2012. The guidelines require a minimum living space of 4.5 sq m gross floor area per worker, inclusive of basic living facilities such as bedroom, living/dining room, kitchen, toilet and yard areas.

Westlite Mandai, which houses workers from India, Bangladesh, China and Thailand, has 14- to 16-bed units with ensuite bathrooms and kitchens. Besides a supermarket, a coffee shop, ATMs, laundromats and a gymnasium, the facility also has a reading room with national newspapers from India and Bangladesh — in addition to local newspapers — and provides free Wi-Fi access. It also has a futsal court, a basketball court, a volleyball court and a cricket batting cage.

Residents whom TODAY spoke to said they were pleased with the dormitory. Chinese construction worker Zhang Qiang, 47, who has worked in Singapore for eight years and moved into Westlite Mandai three months ago, said the dormitories he previously lived in had shared toilets located in common areas.

During his speech yesterday, Mr Tan said developments such as Westlite Mandai — which cater to the social and recreational needs of workers— complement the Government's efforts to ensure the well-being of foreign workers, while enabling employers to fulfil their obligations to provide appropriate accommodation to them.

Correction: This article originally reported that the Manpower Minister held a dialogue with key players in the foreign worker dormitory sector, including the Port of Singapore Authority. This is incorrect. The Port of Singapore Authority was dissolved on Sept 30, 1997 and is no longer in existence. It has since been known as the PSA Corporation or PSA since Oct 1, 1997 when it corporatised. The port authority of Singapore is the Maritime & Port Authority of Singapore or MPA. We apologise for the error. This story was updated on April 21, 3.50pm.

[Click here to read the full article on TODAYonline](#)