

DECCAN Chronicle

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Indian Malaysian gets 8 years in jail for human trafficking

An ethnic Indian in Malaysia has been sentenced to eight years in jail for human trafficking and abusing his Indonesian maid, three months after his wife was jailed for scalding the woman with a hot iron, a news report said on Saturday. A. Vealu, a 42-year-old grass-cutting contractor, was convicted of exploiting a 26-year-old Win Farida, a maid from East Java, who was found with burn injuries after she was abandoned by Vealu and his wife Poongavanam last year. Vealu and Poongavanam were jointly charged under the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act which carries the maximum 20 years' jail sentence and fine. Vealu has not yet been jailed pending his appeal, the *New Straits Times* said on Friday. Poongavanam is currently serving an eight year jail sentence after she was found guilty of grievously hurting Faridaa with a hot iron in September last year, the daily said. A district court in northern Penang state passed the verdict on Friday. Judge Roslan said Vealu's claims that he was forced by his wife Poongavanam to abandon the maid after hurting her was just an afterthought. He said Vealu had also never rebutted the maid's testimony of sexual abuse during the defence stage. The maid, who was discovered by a roadside, had also accused Vealu of repeatedly raping her. Malaysia relies heavily on foreign workers in its plantation, construction and many other sectors. It also relies Indonesia, Cambodia, India, Sri Lanka and the Philippines for house maids as Malaysians are not keen to take up these jobs. However, cases of maid abuse have been frequent. Last year, Indonesia banned its maids from working in Malaysia after a case of maid abuse surfaced. Earlier this week, Tenaganita, a migrant labour activist group, urged Cambodia to stop sending maids, after cases of maid abuse and overwork. The call followed news reports on the recent death of one maid, though police say she was not abused and died of pneumonitis and the alleged abuse of another, including having her head shaved bald. Tenaganita said in a statement that many of the Cambodian maids remain "in a condition of forced labour with practices of modern day slavery."

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