



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பிளாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

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Letter to the Editor

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## Malaysia fails at worksite safety once again

On March 5<sup>th</sup> two Bangladeshi workers were killed at a housing project construction site in Mentakab, Temerloh when they were buried by huge piles of soil that had been collected on the edge of the pits, as they were installing sewerage pipes. Reports further state that when the two workers were carrying out their work in an estimated 6 metre pit, there were two machines close to the pit being used to dig up more soil.

The authorities have said early investigation show no signs of foul play but that is not what they should be focusing on. They should be looking into the apparent negligence by the company that hired the workers and allowed them to work in such unsafe conditions.

The authorities should be asking:

- I. Why were there workers digging right above the pit when there were workers in the pit?
- II. Why were there huge piles of soil placed right at the edge of the pit when it could easily fall right back in when workers were in it? Were the workers in the pit wearing their safety equipment such as safety harnesses?
- III. Was there a supervisor monitoring their work and whether they were following safety procedures?

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) has repeatedly stressed that the lives of construction site workers matter; they should not be treated as dispensable commodity.

We have also said that DOSH needs to step up their game every time a tragedy happens at a construction site. However things remain the same. This is apparent in contractors and developers lackadaisical attitude towards their workers safety. The excuse that DOSH keeps giving is also the same – they are under staffed.

All the excuses just means that more construction site workers will needlessly die.

We call on the authorities to finally make a change so that the same tragedy does not keep repeating itself. We reiterate that DOSH must work smarter (not harder); they need to conduct their checks covertly and hand out maximum punishments that can work as deterrents. When construction site accidents result in fatalities employers should be charged under the Penal Code for manslaughter.

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President

Consumers Association of Penang