



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Letter to the Editor

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HAVE DOSH'S PAST SAFETY CHECKS BEEN A SHAM

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is perplexed by the fact that DOSH has reported that they have sealed tower cranes for breaking various safety and maintenance measures and they have found crane workers using fake competency licences, even though they claim that they are carrying out safety checks at construction sites every 15 months.

After the tragic death of Joice Chin Khoo Sing, who was killed when a tower crane hook fell on her car as she was driving, DOSH announced that they would be cracking down on construction sites in Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor and Penang to check whether or not the tower cranes were fit and the tower crane workers were legal.

According to an English daily, DOSH has reported that in the state of Johor they have found 47 tower crane workers with fake competency licences and even though they have in their record a list of 159 competent operators there are 273 tower cranes in operation (as of September, 6th). DOSH also says that they have checked 156 tower cranes in the 3 states and 1 federal territory and have sealed 43 of them for various violations (as of September, 8th).

What we cannot understand is that if DOSH has really been conducting their safety checks at construction sites as religiously as they claim, then how is it that there are so many unlicensed tower cranes in operation and illegal tower crane workers at these construction sites; putting the lives of the public and other construction site workers in danger. Have DOSH's safety checks been a sham all along?

If they are not a sham, then the only other reason we can think of that can explain the numbers reported by DOSH is that their SOP of conducting safety checks every 15 months is just not sufficient – this is something that we have been stressing for a long time. With that much time in between checks, errant contractors no doubt take it to mean that they have a year and 3 months to flout the law if it will benefit them, without being caught. DOSH's scheduled safety checks have become an enabler instead of a deterrent.

Once more, CAP reiterates the call for DOSH to decrease the time in between safety checks, to increase the number of technical employees tasked with inspecting construction sites and to make their safety check random instead of scheduled. DOSH also needs to crackdown on construction sites in the other states and federal territories besides Kuala Lumpur, Selangor, Johor and Penang. Lastly, we ask the government to have a Commission of Inquiry to investigate the root cause of their ineffectiveness. For the sake of protecting the lives of construction workers and the public, it is vital that DOSH change the way they handle safety checks at construction sites.

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