



Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

檳城消費人協會 பினாங்கு பயனீட்டாளர் சங்கம்

Websites:
www.consumer.org.my

10 Jalan Masjid Negeri, 11600 Pulau Pinang, Malaysia
Tel: 604-8299511 Fax: 604-8298109
email: consumerofpenang@gmail.com

Letter to the editor

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FROM CRANES TO PILLING RIGS

Each time an incident has occurred at a construction site and it resulted in the death of one or more innocent lives, The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) called on the government to conduct a full inquiry into the operations of the Department of Safety and Health's (DOSH) operations; but unfortunately, it seems to have fallen on deaf ears.

We are iterating that call on account of the couple who was crushed by a pilling rig as they were passing a construction site along Persiaran Astana, Klang, last Friday.

Not too long ago, the late Chin Khoo Sing, who was driving by a construction site, was crushed to death when a crane hook fell onto her car. Similarly, the couple in the recent incident, Abdul Rahim Abdul Rahman and his wife, Nurhayati Rosli, were also crushed to death when a whole pilling rig toppled onto their car.

According to early investigations carried out by DOSH and the Selangor Fire Department, the pilling rig fell over because it was being moved across very soft ground. The crane moving the pilling rig could not handle the weight and got stuck in the ground.

The vital question here is why is this happening again? It was (and still is) our opinion that one such incident was already too many and we believed the Malaysian Government, DOSH in particular, would share our opinion. However, we are disappointed to note that our belief seems to have been misguided as DOSH has once more allowed such an incident to take place.

It has been reported that the incident is being investigated under the Malaysian Penal Code, Section 304 (a) – Causing Death by Negligence. While some may see this as a good move, CAP is worried that this will result in the authorities becoming even more complacent with the lack of safety inspection and enforcement action. The aim here is to prevent any incidents of this nature from happening; not to simply prosecute the responsible party after enabling the incident to happen.

While it would seem that the general attitude of those involved in the Malaysian construction industry towards safety, the consequences of their actions and the value of human life is the cause of this development industry crisis, ultimately we feel that DOSH is to blame. They have failed at their task of keeping contractors in line by allowing these contractors to believe that having that sort of attitude about safety is acceptable through their action, or better yet, their lack of action.

Again, it all comes down to DOSH and how poorly it conducts itself – evidently insufficient when it comes to safety checks at construction sites and the enforcement action taken against errant contractors.

CAP has said from the beginning that DOSH needs to change the way it operates and yet no positive change is apparent.

As such we once more call on the government to conduct a thorough audit of DOSH's operations, to pin point where they are lacking and to rectify it. This is a crucial step towards the ensured safety of both the public and construction workers.

S.M MOHAMED IDRIS
President
Consumers Association of Penang