



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

19 February 2018

MALAYSIA'S TOWERING INFERNO SAGA CONTINUES

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is highly concerned with the lack of regard by the authorities for fire safety in our country.

At 11.50am on 13 February a fire that started during some maintenance work on the EPF building in Jalan Gasing, Petaling Jaya was able to spread quickly because the cladding on the exterior wall of the building was made from a material that did not comply with specifications.

News articles have quoted the material as polyethylene/polyurethane/polystyrene; in general we call this material poly-foam. Any of this sounds familiar?

In July of last year, CAP had already voiced our concerns that the high-rise buildings in Malaysia could possibly share the same fate as the Grenfell Tower in London that went up in flames because of the non-fire retardant cladding (aluminium sheets with a polyethylene core) attached to the exterior wall of the building.

We even wrote to the Fire Department, Ministry of housing and Local Government on this matter and we were informed that all buildings in Malaysia adhere to the Uniform Building By-Laws 1984 (UBBL 1984).

The UBBL 1984 states that material used on the exterior of a building must be non-combustible or Class O material, if the cladding is less than 1.2 meters away from the external wall or (even if the distance between cladding and exterior wall is more than 1.2 meters) is more than 18 metres in height.

If the UBBL 1984 were truly being adhered as we have been informed by the authorities then the fire incident at the EPF building would not have happened.

If for some reason the Fire Department had been delayed and reached the EPF building later than the reported 5 minutes, the incident could have very well been a repeat of the tragedy that happened at the Grenfell Tower.

In light of this we call on the relevant authorities to take the following measures immediately:-

The Fire and Rescue Department must conduct mandatory check across the country at all high-rise buildings to ensure that safety specifications have been complied with.

The UBBL 1984 must be amended to specify that material used for cladding (or anything similar to that) should be non-flammable/fire retardant. Material that is "less flammable" should not be acceptable.

It must be mandatory for the Fire and Rescue Department to inspect a building after it has undergone renovations to determine whether it is safe.

Action must be taken against all parties who allow flammable materials to be used in building renovation projects.

Action must be taken to ensure that the UBBL 1984 is gazetted in all the states in Malaysia.

S.M. MOHAMED IDRIS

President

Consumers Association of Penang