

Industrial hygiene, safety still wanting

Dato' Dzul kifli Abd Razak

Article

- Comment - New Sunday Times - 11/21/2004

While the nation is focused on troubled building projects under the beleaguereh Project Management Consultancy system, equally worrying is a statement on industrial hygiene by the Department of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH).

According to DOSH, of more than 700 premises and another 600-odd outlets inspected for industrial hygiene recently, "almost all were given between two weeks and two months to abide by the regulations" (MM, Nov 13).

In other words, even if those problems with the flawed buildings were absent, we would still be faced with other problems at the construction sites.

While construction problems shout their presence, industrial hygiene is shy to show itself.

In some cases, the workers themselves were not aware of their rights despite the fact that it can be hazardous, if not fatal.

Here is where the recent proposal to include smoking as part of occupational safety and health concerns should be supported.

Still going by DOSH sources, about 2,000 small and medium industries and construction firms were recently ordered to improve safety and health standards.

The appalling standards were reflected in last year's disbursement in accident benefits as reported by the Social Security Organisation.

There was a 13.3 per cent increase in payments compared to 2002, from RM722 million to RM754 million. This is bound to increase if nothing is done.

Overall, over a five-year period, the statistics on stop-work-orders and notice of improvement have increased from 822 in 1999 to more than 5,300 in 2003, and more than 5,000 in the first nine months this year. It is a more than 600 per cent increase over five years.

Of course, all this could be the result of more effective enforcement by DOSH. But it undoubtedly reflects the practice in many of the related industries.

Thus it looks like the construction industry in Malaysia has still a long way to go in meeting not only its own construction standards but also that of safety and health.

[Terms & Conditions](#)