

# KERATAN AKHBAR

NAMA AKHBAR: THE SUN (LETTERS)

TARIKH: 18 FEBRUARI 2020

MUKA SURAT: 9

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## Relook laws on occupational safety

THE Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is horrified at the collapse on Feb 14 at the condominium under construction at Taman Desa, Kuala Lumpur.

The Protect Taman Desa Coalition has from the start raised concerns.

CAP's warnings about a lack of safety measures and enforcement at construction sites have fallen on deaf ears as such construction hazards are seen repeatedly.

The reaction from the authorities does not protect the workers and the public while errant developers often get away with a slap on the wrist.

From January to November 2018, there were 143 deaths and 8,191 accidents in the construction sector.

The high accident and fatality rates are from the Department of Safety and Health (DOSH), an undermanned agency with only 100 officers nationwide to oversee 14,000 active construction sites.

We call on the government to relook the Occupational Safety and Health Act 1994.

We suggest the government make the jail sentence of not more than two years mandatory and increase the fine to 20% of the value of the project. The fine will then be in tandem with the value of the project.

Section 15 (1) of the Act provides a maximum fine of RM50,000 or imprisonment of not more than two years, or both upon conviction.

Hold the person-in-charge (that is the contractor, architect or the engineer) responsible for the safety of the project.

Should there be an element of negligence or evidence of non-compliance with the standard operating procedure, charges should be filed against them besides deregistering them from their professional bodies.

It is neither effective nor practical to send health and safety officers all over the country to check on projects.

It will be more effective to tighten the law to give no leeway to offenders.

There is a need to effectively monitor all building projects as the number may fluctuate drastically depending on the country's economic situation and demand.

We reiterate the call for the government to review laws governing the construction sector to ensure that they serve as a deterrent. However, strict enforcement of the law will be the key factor.

**Fathima Mohd Idris**  
Vice President  
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A section of the affected structure in Taman Desa, Kuala Lumpur. —BERNAMAPIX