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Dept, CIDB streamline efforts

Hamisah Hamid

THE Department of Occupational Safety and Health (Dosh) and the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) are streamlining efforts to train scaffolders to eliminate any overlapping of such training activities.

The move follows CIDB's proposal that it also be allowed to certify scaffolders in the construction industry. At present, only the National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (Niosh) conducts training for scaffolders, as part of its safety-related programmes.

Human Resources Minister Datuk Lim Ah Lek said CIDB will complement the efforts made by his ministry.

"If CIDB offers to conduct the same training, more people can be trained. This is good because we have massive construction projects in the country and many workers are involved in erecting scaffoldings."

Speaking to reporters after visiting a construction site at Texas Instruments' factory in Kuala Lumpur yesterday, Lim said: "So far, we have produced about 400 certified scaffolders through the five-day scaffolding training at the institute.

He said Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, during Cabinet meetings, had raised concern on the safety of scaffolders at construction sites.

Lim also said the department will provide the names of contractors at construction sites who flout safety measures to the CIDB, which can de-register or revoke the licences of such contractors.

Lim said all the six fatal accidents at construction sites in Klang Valley and Selangor within the first two weeks this year were due to negligence.

"It is the contractors' fault because the working environment at those sites is terrible and unsafe. Those accidents could have been avoided," he said.

So far, the stop-work order at all the six sites have yet to be lifted. It will be lifted once the department's officials are satisfied with the safety standards at the site.

"That is why we will mobilise 30 of our officers from other states, two weeks after Hari Raya, to conduct checks at construction sites here," he said.

This time, a stop-work order will be issued to contractors who seriously violate safety standards even before any accidents occur.

"We realise the loss of revenue and income to various parties, including the Government, if a stop work order is issued, but the priority here is to save lives ... the lives of the workers as well as the public," he reiterated.

There are about 500 construction sites in Klang Valley and Selangor alone.

He said it is the responsibility of the contractors to ensure that safety procedures are followed.

"They are required to have safety committees, safety plans, safety officers and they must brief the workers before work begins.

"It seems that the Government's effort at ensuring safety standards at worksites does not get across to some of the stubborn contractors," he said.

Last Monday, a worker was killed at the construction site of an

additional six-storey building at the Texas Instrument factory.

The Department of Occupational Safety and Health is investigating the accident.

Nge Kiat Cheong, 28, died after he slipped and fell through the air-conditioning shaft from the sixth floor of the building under construction.

Lim said the accident could have been avoided if the working environment had been safe. There were no harnesses or railings at the building when the accident occurred.

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