

Consultant solely

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responsible



PETALING JAYA: The architect in charge of the demolition of the former Jaya Supermarket in Section 14 is solely responsible for any tragedy on the site, according to local by-laws.

Petaling Jaya City Council (MBPJ) development and planning committee member Derek Fernandez said according to the Uniform Building By-laws 1984, the person submitting the plans for demolition work and construction of a building - in this case the architect and consultant firm DP Architects Sdn Bhd or another firm appointed by them with the approval of the MBPJ - is responsible for the proper execution of works until its completion.

(The consultant did not return a call from *theSun* at press time.)

Fernandez said due to changes in the law by the Housing and Local Government Ministry in 2007, local councils no longer issue Certificates of Fitness (CFs)

for new building or be responsible for its worthiness.

He said the ministry came up with a new endorsement called the Certificate of Completion and Compliance (CCC) which will be submitted by the approved building consultant who applied to erect a building. With the introduction of the CCC, the consultant bears sole responsibility of ensuring the fitness of the building and the safety of the workers at the site.

The 10-storey building owned by Jaya Section Fourteen Sdn Bhd was vacated about two years ago and was undergoing demolition for the reconstruction of a new seven-storey shopping complex. Seven workers died last

Thurs-

day when part of the building collapsed. While the cause of the collapse is being probed, Fernandez said the risks involved in the construction of the building, including the way it crumbled, had been outlined in a document (Methods Statement) submitted to the council before the building consultant started work at the site.

"Whether the consultant failed to take steps to prevent this incident is yet to be known and is being probed but these risks had been clearly stated and it is the consultant's responsibility to take all the necessary precautions to ensure there are no mishaps. We have done away with monitoring as the architects are professionals and they should know and be best at what they are doing.

"It is a self-regulated profession similar to a doctor

who is entrusted to treat patients professionally. He is a professional, he should know what to do. We, the local council, are no longer inspectors. It is not cost-effective for local councils to have their own building consultants," he said.

He said there are no discrepancies in the work plan submitted by the consultant as he had observed the daily building plan accordingly.

Fernandez said the government should revert to the old system where local councils had the final say on the worthiness of a building and issued CFs. "If the CCC does not protect the public and if the government cannot rely on the competency of professionals, the law must be changed and we must have consultants from the government to check on them.

"If this is done, there is a huge cost which will be passed on to the developer. We cannot be using taxpayers money to fund such evaluations for a project that belongs to the developer. Building consultants should also have indemnity or professional insurance to bear the responsibility of restitution for any mishap which may affect others," he added.

It is learnt that according to the Methods Statement which refers to the procedures, risks and precautions involved in the demolition of the building, the work involved the hoisting and placing of four mini excavators on the fourth floor for the progressive removal of the floors.

In **SHAH ALAM**, Selangor Department of Safety and Health director Amir Yahya told Bernama yesterday a structural expert would be appointed to advise an investigation committee to determine the cause of the collapse.

He said the investigations would take a while as the department needed time to investigate from various angles. It would also inspect the machinery used in the demolition works.

The department had also issued a "Stop Work" order to the contractor as the area was unsafe for workmen to perform their tasks.

Meanwhile, MTUC Safety and Health Committee chairman A. Balasubramaniam said the committee members visited the site yesterday to help workers who needed help.

The MTUC vice-president said the congress was concerned over the welfare of the workers and would ensure they were protected.

He hoped the families of the seven workers killed in the building collapse would be duly compensated by the contractor.



CHARLES RAMENDRAN/THE SUN

In plain view ... The English words hide the purpose of the poster which is to broadcast loan services. The real message is in big Chinese characters: "Borrow 1,000, receive 960" referring to the sum of the loan and the amount disbursed. Selangor CPO Datuk Khalid Abu Bakar holds up the poster yesterday to announce the seizure of items which bore details of moneylending services. Full report page 4.