

**PAPER PRESENTED BY MR. JIMMY C S LIM – PRESIDENT OF
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PARK ROYAL HOTEL**

**CONFERENCE TOWARDS CONSTRUCTION SITE
ACCIDENTS PREVENTION**

**TITLE “PROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION AND CERTIFICATION”
–
THE ARCHITECT’S ROLE**

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INTRODUCTION

Although I am President of Pam, I must emphasize that whatever that is expressed are those of my personal views and not necessarily that of all other members of PAM. Some members may share my views whilst others beg to differ. That is the democratic system that exists in my Institute.

MALAYSIAN ACCIDENTS

Before I commence to discuss about “Construction Site Accident Prevention”, I would like to share with you some other accidents;

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| 1. | Regular Train Derailments | |
| 2. | Regular Power Blackouts | |
| 3. | Port Klang Explosion | 1991 |
| 4. | Sungei Buloh Fireworks Explosion | 7/5/91 |
| 5. | Fireworks Fire – Taiping | 4/12/91 |
| 6. | Train Derailment | 2/4/92 |
| 7. | Airport Fire 1 | 7/4/92 |
| 8. | Port Klang Shell Fire | 22/6/92 |
| 9. | Sinking of Luxury Liner | 8/8/92 |
| 10. | Oil Tanker/Cargo Ship Collision | 9/92 |
| 11. | Cheras Apartment Collapse | 11/9/92 |
| 12. | Power Blackout –Nationwide | 1/10/92 |
| 13. | Airport Control Fire | 16/10/92 |

Are Malaysians accidents prone? Are we careless? Or do we simply love ‘excitement’ out of the ordinary? On the International scene Malaysians have acquired our unenviable reputation for drug trafficking, financial frauds, kidnapping and murder. It is not a glossy picture. I am quite sure all of you here are as embarrassed as I am over all that which I have just described.

The sad truth about the reoccurrence of these accidents and events is that Malaysians:

- a) are too sensitive;
- b) do not want to upset or embarrass another;
- c) do not want to tell the truth as it may hurt another;
- d) would want to do another a favour as One may need another’s favour one day;
- e) also love confidentiality – so everything is ‘sulit’;
- f) love to be ‘tidak apa’ in a lot of things we do;
- g) love the ‘fast buck’.

All these, which I have just described above, are meant to create a background scenario for you contextualise and review the topic of today’s seminar.

This seminar is timely and sufficiently high-powered with full support and backing from the Ministry of Housing and Local Government. We should speak openly, without fear of alienating our peers, frankly but friendly, in a

true spirit of altruism with objectivity and understanding our responsibility, dedicated towards the task of eliminating the problems which currently beset the construction industry.

MALAYSIAN ATTITUDE TOWARDS ACCIDENTS

I, therefore, intend to speak candidly about accident at construction sites. The situation is serious. It is no longer an isolated incident. If I recall after the collapse of the building at Jalan Raja Laut in 1969, there was no major incidences affecting the building industry until the fire at Campbell Complex in 1977. In recent years the spate of accidents at construction sites has caused alarm and shattered the confidence of the general public concerning high-rise buildings.

Typically Malaysian, when an accident occur there is 'finger-pointing' everywhere, there is power-play, there is always a need to look for an instant 'scapegoat' and no one prepared to bear responsibility for anything that has gone wrong.

As Malaysia surges forward to Wawasan 2020, can we afford to be so flippant towards our own shortcomings? If we are to be industrialized can we afford to be shoddy and careless? Industrialized means we have to be organized, co-ordinated, precise, accurate, responsible, diligent, honest, quality conscious, the list goes on. Our Government has tried to instill the Japanese work ethics into Malaysians; it may not work here as the Japanese ethics based on their Samurai Culture has a strong military tradition. Currently we are promoting 'Quality' among government employees. It must also percolate through the various stratas of the private sector industries. With Malaysia's Vision 2020 at the horizon, it becomes imperative and essential that Malaysians associated with the building industry are committed towards developing a spirit of responsibility and accountability. Current cultural values based on traditional non-confrontational compromises will not see Malaysia becoming a society valuing and appreciating 'Quality' as a hallmark of Malaysian lifestyle. Quality presupposes Quality control. Quality control cannot be achieved without shifting entrenched values. This may cause one to become unpopular and may cause alienation from one's peers in the building industry.

PROFESSIONALS Vs NON-PROFESSIONALS

The disparity existing within the construction industry needs urgent redress. You cannot have within a system where at one end of the spectrum a highly qualified, trained, legislated group of professionals who rely on a virtually untrained, unqualified and non-registered or regulated group at the other end, the responsibility and task of constructing great edifices and structures.

How does a professional maintain his professionalism in a society and industry where sometimes the professional Code of Conduct and Ethics is not understood, accepted or misrepresented.

How does a professional maintain his professionalism when many of the personnel associated within building industry do not appear to have a code of responsibility and accountability, a sense of social responsibility or are regulated by law?

How does a professional maintain his professionalism when all the motivating forces within the building industry are polarized around the magic word 'profit margin'?

The anomaly is too vast. That more and more complex buildings are coming on stream, means that the need for an adequately trained skilled group of technicians become more critical. Unless these needs are addressed more and more buildings and structures may collapse with even greater tragic consequences. Similar and equitable value must become the norm and transcend the whole building industry.