



## CIDB to conduct more site inspections following spike in Covid-19 cases

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Covid-19 outbreak in the country has left a lasting scar on the construction industry with suspension and delays in projects as well as cost overruns coupled with about 4,000 Covid-19 infections recorded just at various worksites as of Dec 21, making it extremely vulnerable.

Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) records showed that the value of construction projects awarded fell 42% to RM55.3bil from January to October 2020 compared with RM94.6bil in the same period last year.

Chief executive, Datuk Ahmad 'Asri Abdul Hamid, said it was also estimated that the construction industry experienced losses of about RM11.6bil between March 18 (when the movement control order began) and April 14 this year, and RM6.9bil more was recorded following the reopening of 13 sub-sectors from April 15 to May 1, 2020.

"The losses were estimated from the value of salaries, building materials, machinery rentals, project management and profit which was lost when the industry was not allowed to operate," he told *Bernama*.

Based on CIDB data, he said, 8,004 construction sites were inspected nationwide from April 20 to Dec 21, 2020, 79 or about 1% of the construction sites were not in operation.

"Our records show that by end-August this year, only 1% of construction sites were not operating. However, the figure increased slightly (as of last month) with the enforcement of enhanced MCO in Kedah and Sabah.

"Some sites which are still in operation



**Curbing the spread:** The movement of workers between construction sites has been identified as the main cause of Covid-19 transmission.

could not operate at full capacity.

"Among reasons for construction sites being unable to function fully are unavailability of workers, materials and capital, and also concerns of infection risk," he added.

With this current spike in cases at construction sites, Ahmad 'Asri said CIDB had increased site monitoring and inspection across the country through the inter-agency construction site enforcement committee, which included other agencies such as the Department of Occupational Safety and

Health, Public Works Department, Labour Department and the local authorities.

Since April 20, CIDB has conducted 14,025 site inspections, which average about 1,400 inspections per month.

As of last month, it had issued warnings, including stop work orders, to about 800 construction sites for not complying with MCO standard operating procedures.

"Critical aspects to look at when dealing with Covid-19 spread at sites are the condition of the construction sites, worker accom-

modation and their movement from one site to another.

"In fact, the movement of workers between construction sites has been identified as the main cause of Covid-19 transmission at construction sites. Cluster Damanlela is an example of this, whereby five construction projects were affected," he said.

As a response to the current third wave of rise in Covid-19 cases which involved construction sites, an industry engagement session has been organised and chaired by the Senior Minister of Works Datuk Seri Fadillah Yusof to find viable solutions to curb the spread of Covid-19.

The virtual engagement session was attended by representatives from 46 government agencies, and industry associations representing developers, contractors, consultants and building material suppliers, to gain consensus on how to curb Covid-19 infections at construction sites.

Based on consensus made during the engagement, the National Security Council has announced that it is compulsory for all foreign workers in the construction sector in CMCO-affected states to be tested for Covid-19 using the rapid test kit antigen, which is much cheaper than the polymerase chain reaction kit.

The postponement of the implementation of the multi-tier foreign worker levy system to July 1, 2021, which was originally scheduled to take effect on Jan 1, 2021, is also expected to provide extra breathing space for the industry going into its recovery phase. — *Bernama*