

Worksite's focus on safety and welfare gets thumbs-up

October 13, 2016

Workers at Paya Lebar Quarter appreciate work-hours tracking, canteen, and prayer room

With a high-tech biometric entry system and dedicated facilities such as an on-site canteen and a prayer room for Muslim workers, Paya Lebar Quarter might not seem like an average construction site.

Underlying these measures is a focus on safety and productivity.

Said Mr Richard Paine, managing director of Lendlease's Paya Lebar Quarter: "By being a supportive workplace that cares for our workers, we will be able to improve their lives and enable them to be more productive."

Paya Lebar Quarter is a mixed development with seven buildings: one for retail, three for commercial use and three for residential use.

The worksite is an example of better welfare and safety for construction workers, whose work conditions have been in the spotlight due to deaths and injuries. Of the 55 workplace deaths so far this year, 20 were in the construction industry.

At Paya Lebar Quarter, a biometric entry system uses facial recognition to track each worker's hours, ensuring they do not work more than the maximum. It also allows the site management to track the ratio of supervisors to workers, to ensure adequate frontline supervision.



Clocking in

When workers tap in to access the site, facial recognition technology tracks working hours to ensure that workers are not exceeding the maximum hours.



Washing up

A purpose-built block contains toilet and shower facilities.



Steering clear

Walkways are separated from driveways, with crossings clearly marked, to minimise the risk of accidents.



Room for faith

Muslim workers have a dedicated prayer room.



Keeping healthy

Workers feeling unwell can rest in the First Aid Room, where basic health checks are also carried out.



Eating well

Fresh food is prepared daily at the on-site canteen.



Staying safe

Mass safety briefings are conducted in English, Tamil, Mandarin and Bengali.

Source and PHOTOS: LENDLEASE STRAITS TIMES GRAPHICS

The project also uses drones to monitor the site - a practice that could become more widespread. Lend lease is working with the Building and Construction Authority to share its experience.

ALMOST LIKE HOME

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SITE SUPERVISOR GOVINDARAJ DHANABAL “

Video and still images of the site are captured and reviewed to track progress and ensure safe methods.

Workers say they appreciate the attention to safety. Said JDC Corporation lifting supervisor Shagar Abdus Samad, 41, who has worked in Singapore for 18 years: "Compared with the other sites I've worked at, here, security really comes first."

Mr R. Gopalakrishnan, 31, an assistant land surveyor also from JDC, liked how walkways and driveways are separated to avoid accidents.

As for work conditions, he is glad for freshly cooked canteen food such as briyani and thosai, and proper toilets rather than portable ones.

Site supervisor Govindaraj Dhanabal, 36, agreed: "The temporary facilities are very good. It feels like you're in a house, not a workplace."

Mr Haque Nasarul, 31, a lifting supervisor from Bangladesh, likes that there is a prayer room for Muslim workers such as himself.

Dr Noorashikin Abdul Rahman, president of foreign worker advocacy group Transient Workers Count Too, said it was good that such facilities were offered. "It's good that they actually have a proper place to take a rest during their break and have meals in hygienic conditions."

Purpose-built toilets and canteens are not necessarily rare, but not all sites will find it feasible to have such facilities, noted Singapore Contractors Association president Kenneth Loo.

"It really depends on the site conditions and the size of the contract," he said. Economies of scale also play a part: "If your worker volume is small, it's not enough for it to make sense to have a canteen."

Lendlease declined to say how much the initiatives cost. Since 2012, all of its project tenders require contractors to ferry workers in air-conditioned buses, instead of lorries.