

News

The number of workplace accidents rose by 9.8 per cent last year compared to the previous year. This report looks beyond the statistics to show that it is often a life-changing matter for the worker

Losing leg 'felt like the end of life'

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THIS is a story of tragedy and despair. It is also one of kindness and hope.

Bangladeshi construction worker Ismail Asgar Hossain, 29, will never forget what happened to him at 9.30am on March 4 at Seagate Technologies International in Ang Mo Kio.

The construction worker said: "I don't like to talk about it but the truth is, I remember everything that happened that day."

Mr Ismail fell from a height of 3m when a frame he was standing on collapsed.

A part of the escalator - which he and a group of workers were removing at that time - fell and crushed his left leg.

According to a Ministry of Manpower (MOM) incident report, a part of the structure Mr Ismail was

standing on dislodged when a forklift was dismantling the escalator.

He was taken to Tan Tock Seng Hospital (TTSH). "When the ambulance came that day, I was very scared. I thought I was going to die because I could not take the pain," the bachelor said.

At the hospital, things took a turn for the worse. "A doctor told me he couldn't save my leg. I felt like my life had ended," said Mr Ismail.

"I pleaded with them. 'Please save it,' I said but they said they could not. I was in tears."

Following physiotherapy at TTSH, Mr Ismail was transferred to Orange Valley Nursing Home last month, where he now spends his days recuperating.

He said: "I don't blame anyone for the accident because it is fate. But now I worry about my future. I can't work any more."

The man who used to enjoy sports now spends his days in bed or hobbles around on one leg.

He grew sadder when he caught sight of his artificial limb and a pair of crutches.

Although his condition has improved since leaving the hospital, he cannot stand, walk or climb for long periods.

"I can't go out and walk long distances because I get tired easily and my stump will blister," he said.

"Part of my left hand was also injured in the fall, so I can't hold on to things properly."

Touched

Despite his troubles, Mr Ismail says he has been touched by the kindness of people.

His medical and living expenses are paid for by his employers, who still pay him a salary - \$550 a month. Before the accident, he earned about \$710 a month.

The company had not responded to queries by press time.

Mr Ismail had nothing but kind words for his employers.

He said: "They have treated me well. They found me a place to stay and are paying me even though I am not working. I wish I could do something to repay them."

His friends also make regular trips to the nursing home.

With money matters off his mind, his thoughts are now with his family of five, who live in the Chandpur district in Bangladesh. He has forbidden them from travelling here to see him.

"My parents are old and my siblings are married with their own lives. I don't want them to spend money to visit me," he said.

"Besides, my friends from my work visit me all the time, so that makes me happy."

An MOM spokesman said the ministry is now processing Mr Ismail's work injury compensa-



CRUSHED: Bangladeshi worker Ismail Asgar Hossain lost his leg when the escalator he was dismantling got dislodged and the frame he was standing on collapsed.

Injuries and compensation

Injury compensation

2012 **13,298**

2011 **12,768**

Compensation paid out (Work Injury Compensation Act)

2012 **\$76.66 million**

2011 **\$80.99 million**

Increase in workplace injuries

(2011 to 2012): **9.8 per cent**

Major injuries

2012 **588**

2011 **556**

Minor injuries

2012 **10,469**

2011 **9,504**

Fatal injuries

2012 **56**

2011 **61**

■ Note: The Work Injury Compensation Act was amended on June 1 last year to increase compensation limits for injured workers.

■ Source: Ministry of Manpower, The Workplace Safety and Health Institute

tion claim. She said: "Mr Ismail is undergoing his medical treatment and a medical assessment will be carried out to determine the extent of his injury (whether there is any permanent incapacity) once his condition has stabilised."

The ministry did not say how much Mr Ismail will receive but compensation for permanently incapacitated workers is capped at \$218,000.

Whatever the sum may be, Mr Ismail said he has great hopes for the future and that it is time to move on.

"The only thing I have to look forward to is starting a new life when I go back home to Bangladesh," he said.

"Maybe there I can start a small business. I want to carry on with my life and put the accident behind me".