

# Penang govt asked to submit report

THE STAR - 6 24110

## Noh: Ministry wants state authorities to explain why hillslope project was allowed

**KUALA LUMPUR:** The Penang state government has been asked to present a report on the Tanjung Bungah landslide tragedy to the National Physical Planning Council next week.

Urban Wellbeing, Housing and Local Government Minister Tan Sri Noh Omar said Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng is expected to explain the incident to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak during the meeting.

The ministry has sent an official letter to the state government requesting the report.

"We are giving them a chance to table a report," Noh told a press conference here yesterday.

Noh also said the state government did not follow the Guidelines for Hillside and Highland Areas Development Planning set by the Federal Government on hillslope developments.

"Penang did not follow our recommendations. They claimed their report was more detailed and comprehensive due to the nature of the land," he told a press conference here yesterday.

Noh said the state government

preferred to use its own Safety Guidelines for Hill Site Development 2012.

He added that a state government has the liberty not to follow the guidelines issued by the Federal Government.

"A state has full authority over any decision, so we cannot force them to follow our guidelines," he said, adding that local governments should still take heed of the Federal stipulations.

Noh also challenged DAP adviser Lim Kit Siang to tell his son to resign over the landslide tragedy.

Noh said he did not want to politicise the matter but it was only appropriate because Kit Siang had blamed him for the fire that claimed 23 lives at the Darul Quran Ittifaqiyah tahfiz school in Kampung Keramat, Kuala Lumpur, last month.

"They like to politicise such tragedies. Kit Siang even blamed me over the tahfiz fire.

"So now, I am challenging him to tell his son Guan Eng to resign," he said.

Kit Siang had reportedly said that Noh should be sacked or trans-

ferred for failing to ensure urban wellbeing.

On Saturday morning, 11 workers including a site supervisor were killed when a landslide struck at 8.30am while they were carrying out work at the basement area of the affordable housing project.

Guan Eng maintains that the landslide was a construction tragedy.

The National Resources and Environment Ministry said the project was rejected by the Department of Environment in 2015 as it was located close to a quarry.

## Supervisor's family to cremate his remains



### American couple recall workers' harsh plight

**GEORGE TOWN:** An American couple living near the Tanjung Bungah project recalls when the area was hit by floods last month.

Jesse and Sarah Rinkenberger (pic) said the roofs of the foreign workers' shacks were blown off during the huge storm on Sept 15.

"I still remember them desperately trying to fix the roof in the rain.

"They live near our house and it's really disheartening to see them living in such conditions.

"Their employer should have put them in a decent place," said Sarah, 39, when met at the landslide site yesterday.

Jesse, 41, a managing director of a private company, said it was really sad to learn of Saturday's tragedy, which claimed 11 lives.

The Rinkenbergers, who speak fluent Bahasa Malaysia, have been living in Penang for more than 10 years.



**Tragic retrieval:** Fire and rescue personnel carrying away Yuan's body from the scene of the landslide.

**GEORGE TOWN:** Construction site supervisor Yuan Kuok Wern, 27, who was killed in the Tanjung Bungah landslide, will be cremated at the Ten Kongs cemetery in Sungai Ara here.

Two more bodies have been recovered at the site, bringing the total to 11 killed.

The wake was held at Yuan's home in Taman Kenari while the funeral will be on Friday.

At the Penang Hospital mortuary, a close friend, David Giam, said the family was too distraught to speak to reporters.

"Yuan was their only son, although he has a younger sister.

"The family is very grateful to the search and rescue team for recovering the body," the 54-year-old businessman said yesterday.

Asked if the family would take legal action against the developer,

Giam said it was still too early to tell.

Also present was state Welfare, Caring Society and Environment Committee chairman Phee Boon Poh.

Yuan's body arrived at the mortuary at about 11.30am yesterday.

His family performed prayers at the site after his body was taken to the mortuary.

A priest dressed in a yellow robe

recited prayers and conducted a ceremony, lasting 30 minutes, to help Yuan rest in peace.

Prayers were also held at the mortuary before the family claimed the body at 5pm.

## Everything happened so fast, says site worker

**GEORGE TOWN:** "Everything happened so fast. My mind was blank and I was so frightened," Bangladeshi construction worker Mohamad Josim Rahman said when recounting his experience during Saturday's landslide at a housing project in Tanjung Bungah.

Mohamad Josim said he tried to keep calm and move aside the soil that was crashing down on them.

"Luckily, the force of the impact pushed me to safety and I was not buried like the others. That's how I survived," he said yesterday.

He was among three lucky work-

ers who managed to escape the landslide.

The others were Myanmar national Gearsudin Sadul Haq and another unidentified foreign worker.

Mohamad Josim said he was operating a water pump when the soil of the hill suddenly collapsed.

Saturday's landslide claimed the lives of 11 people, including his brother Muhammad Monirul Islam, 26, and supervisor Yuan Kuok Wern, 27.

Another worker, who wished to be known only as Alwin, 50, said

everything happened in less than one minute.

"I was standing at the other side of the construction site and suddenly, I heard a loud bang.

"The workers outside the affected area were screaming at us," he said at his hostel.

Alwin said Yuan was a good boss who taught him a lot.

"I don't know if I can still get my salary. I don't know what I should do next," he added.

Meanwhile, a spokesman for Teik Granite Quarry declined to comment on the incident.

"This incident has nothing to do with us, okay? So sorry, no comment," he said when contacted.

The search and rescue operation ended at noon yesterday.

The bodies of Yuan and Muhammad Monirul were recovered from the debris at 7.03am and 7.13am respectively.

The operation, which began on Saturday at 9am, involved 380 personnel from the Fire and Rescue Department, Civil Defence Force, Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (SMART) Putrajaya, Rela and medical teams.

**I was standing at the other side of the construction site and suddenly, I heard a loud bang. The workers outside the affected area were screaming at us.**

Alwin

Watch the video [thestartv.com](http://thestartv.com)

