

KUALA LUMPUR: Residents of 48 houses in Taman Mega Jaya have been told to evacuate for safety concerns following landslides there.

The names of those who died in the landslide have also been released. They are Chong Siew Kim; 85, E. Ramasamy, 58, A. Mahendran, 36, and Mohd Saiful Ridzuan Ishak, 37.

The survivor, 85-year-old Kim Cheng Kim, who was rescued from the rubble, is still being treated at the Ampang Hospital.

Hulu Langat district officer Dr

48 houses vacated in landslide zone

Ani Ahmad said no time frame has been set for when the evacuated residents can return to their homes.

"The situation is under control but we have to assess the situation first because there could still be land movement. For now, the issue is the stability of the land on the hill," she told a press conference at the scene of the landslide on Thursday.

"An evacuation centre has been opened about 10km away but right now, no victims have reported themselves yet. We are working with our officers to determine the number of affected residents but, on average, if you take five to a household that's over 200 people and we have the space," she said.

Many residents have opted to stay at their relatives' place or at

other accommodations, she added.

An inter-agency strategy involving all relevant authorities such as the police and the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council will also be formed to manage works and logistics, she added.

Ampang Jaya OCPD Asst Comm Mohamad Farouk Eshak, who was at the press conference said that they would focus on patrolling the

area to keep the houses safe.

Selangor Fire and Rescue Department director Norazam Khamis said the department deployed Special Tactical Operation and Rescue teams from here and Ipoh as part of the search and rescue efforts, which lasted until early yesterday morning.



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'Risk of landslides has been there'

Experts: Ampang incident could have been prevented

By ALIZA SHAH
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PETALING JAYA: The landslide in Ampang that claimed four lives on Thursday could have been prevented with proper coordination between agencies and a disaster management system, according to experts.

Prof Emeritus Datuk Dr Ibrahim Komoo, chairman of the Academy of Professors Malaysia's environment and sustainability cluster, said the risk of landslides in Ampang had always been there as it was developed on hilly areas.

"Ampang is located at the foot of Banjaran Titiwangsa, so when you do development at hilly areas, it requires slope-cutting and ponds

The landslide-prone Ampang was hit again on Thursday evening, this time in the vicinity known as Taman Bukit Permai.

Ampang was also the site of the Highland Towers collapse in 1993, which claimed 48 lives.

In September last year, 19 double-story terrace houses along Jalan Kemensah Heights were affected by a landslide.

Prof Ibrahim said he believed that the latest incident in Ampang could have been due to human negligence.

"To prevent landslides from happening, we need to first identify the type of slopes, whether it is a natural, cut or fill slope.

"A natural slope is an act of God. If it collapses then we say that it is a



On high alert:
Rescuers from various agencies monitoring the area.
— Bernama

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requires slope-cutting and ponds. Engineers will analyse the slope stability, and if the risk is too high, they will not proceed with the development," he explained.

Another reason for landslides in Ampang, Prof Ibrahim noted, was the geological conditions in the area, which is filled with weather rock granite that has a mix of sand and silt.

"This condition allows it to absorb and store water, and when oversaturation happens, it will lead to slope failure. This is evident as we can see from videos that the soil flows like liquid as it has a high volume of water. That's also why if a person gets buried underneath, the chances of survival are slim because it is as if the person is drowning in water," he said.

If it collides with one then we say that it is a natural disaster, but if we cut the slope then we need to have certain measures to protect the slope such as retaining walls and a proper drainage system.

"This area appears to be near a cut slope and it has no retaining wall: meaning it is human negligence; even if they have one and the wall collapses, it means that there is a design failure (on the slope)."

Prof Ibrahim said the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council should conduct a survey to identify high-risk slopes.

"If not, they need to advise developers to rectify the areas," he said.

Malaysia Geology Institute president Abdul Rasid Jaafar said the authorities should be transparent with information on areas with a

worth millions, we just have to engage with the communities.

"We have been experiencing this since 1993. We talked about it for a while then it went silent until we had another incident.

"The government has identified hotspot areas, for example, in Ampang, Bukit Antarabangsa, Cameron Highlands and Ipoh, so to say that we have no information is incorrect, the authorities have all the information but why the recurrence?" he questioned.

Abdul Rasid said the authorities had failed to invest in disaster-risk management, which, among others, included the need to educate the public about how they could help to monitor signs of an impending landslide.

"It is so simple, we may not need retaining walls or engineering

worth millions, we just have to engage with the communities.

"We may not be able to prevent landslides but when we talk about dealing with the risk, then death and extreme loss of property are the things that we want to avoid."

He pointed out that Bukit Antarabangsa had a group called 'Slope Watch' that helped the local authorities monitor slopes in high-risk areas.

The authorities, Abdul Rasid added, could also install early warning systems to alert the people of possible landslides.

"It can be based on the rain threshold value or use other tools to monitor slope movement.

"In Thailand, they call it community-based monitoring. It is very simple, they place wood or bamboo

plants and when the people see that it is tilted they will inform the authorities," he said.

Universiti Teknologi Malaysia's Centre of Tropical Geoenvironment (Geotropik) director Prof Dr Edy Tonnizam Mohamad said the National Disaster Management Agency (Nadma) should be more proactive in its role in facing natural disasters.

"If we look at the recent floods, the Meteorological Department sent an alert on heavy rains but the public wouldn't know the specific areas, Nadma should make use of all this information and alert the public.

"As long as we don't have an agency that is responsible for managing natural disasters and monitoring high-risk slopes, landslides will continue to occur," he said.

Residents recall panic and pandemonium before fleeing

By JUSTIN ZACK
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KUALA LUMPUR: First, there was a siren. And then – pandemonium.

Residents of Taman Mega Jaya recalled yesterday how they fled for their lives after tonnes of earth came tumbling down in a landslide that struck their housing area along Jalan Teratai 1/2J.

It was panic everywhere and people were running as fast as they could, said 54-year-old resident Bala Subramaniam who feared more landslides will come.

Bala said that when the landslide started, he heard a siren.

"We heard a sound like a siren before people started shouting. Water was also flowing down. I have stayed here for 18 years and it's the first time such an incident has happened," he said.

Yesterday, many people were seen assessing the damage from the landslide, which left four dead and one injured.

"I haven't got orders to evacuate



To safer grounds: Residents of Taman Mega Jaya moving out after the authorities ordered them to vacate their premises.

because my house is not directly in the landslide zone, but it's only 150m away. Even if I wanted to move now, I can't because there's nowhere to go.

"If the order comes, I will have no choice but to go to the evacuation centre," Bala said.

He said that tree-clearing activities at the affected hills, which

began around a year ago, had him worried.

"The land was cleared to grow plants. I hope the authorities take note," he said.

Another resident, Man Leong Dias, 60, was hoping that the weather would improve.

"I hope there isn't any more rain. We are worried about another landslide. When it happened, I heard loud noises and saw that trees had fallen.

"There was panic because it all happened so fast," he said.

Lee Wel Hua, 55, said residents had been told to evacuate yesterday following the landslides. Those directly affected were only allowed to grab their belongings.

"Those that stay further away were allowed to return home," he added.

Ishak Junos, 54, applauded the prompt response by firefighters.

"I have been staying here for 20 years and this has never happened before.

"I have told my friends who stay

at Taman Bukit Permai 1 to be careful because the affected area is very near their houses," he said.

Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Reezal Merican Naina Merican, when met at the scene, said RM1mil has been allocated for clean-up work.

He said the clean-up work would be done after a risk analysis was completed.

Pandan MP Datuk Seri Dr Wan Azizah Wan Ismail said work needs to be done to ensure the safety of all the residents.

"We hope this can be prevented in the future," she said.

Selangor National Security Council chairman Tan Sri Noh Omar also urged that studies be conducted at the hills and elevated areas around the Ampang area to prevent future incidents.

"This is vital especially in housing areas.

"We do not want another Highland Towers," he said, referring to the 1993 landslide which claimed 48 lives.