

11/12/2002

Fight for justice continues

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KUALA LUMPUR, Tues. - Have we forgotten? These pictures will definitely raise the question.

Nine years ago on this day (Dec 11, 1993), Highland Towers was turned into a household name when the 12-storey Block One collapsed, killing 48 people.

Following the recent Nov 20 landslide which destroyed the home of former Armed Forces chief Tan Sri Ismail Omar, killing his wife, five other family members and two maids, Hillview Estate (where Highland Towers is located) came under focus.

The site where once stood the apartment building is now fringed with secondary jungle and overgrown lalang.

The two remaining blocks of Highland Towers which were deemed unfit for occupation have been vandalised.

It would seem that scrap metal dealers have earned much from the unoccupied buildings.

Even the memory plaque, which had been vandalised, has not been replaced.

Against a concrete block, a steel plaque was placed in memory of those killed in the tragedy. Their names were engraved onto it.

The plaque was unveiled by Datuk Paduka Marina Mahathir, on behalf of her mother, Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, a year after the tragedy.

The inscription on the plaque read: There are many reasons for awakening our sense of faith, hope and love. Here are 48. On 11th December, 1993, Highland Towers crumbled to the ground bringing with it 48 lives, and the faith and hopes of many.

Let us remember the 48 who perished and for their sake, awaken the faith and hopes of those who did not.

"Although it has been almost a decade, the tragedy remains clear in my mind," said Highland Towers Residents and Owners Committee chairman Dr Benjamin George.

"On the ninth anniversary of the tragedy, we remember all the dear ones we lost and hope the loss will continue to inspire us to save other lives from such tragedies which are still happening."

Dr George thanked members of the public for their sympathy and the Press for their continued and sustained support.

"As you know, we had been fighting for the past nine years for just compensation after losing our loved ones, homes and everything we had.

"We won our case in the High Court and lately in the Appeal court.

"We thank the the Almighty for the success of our fight for justice and compensation, with help of our lawyers, Azman, Davidson and Company.

"We are very encouraged by these events but the battle is not over and there is an appeal to the Federal Court pending.

"As chairman of the committee, I want to congratulate them on the success thus far and to encourage each one of our members to keep up the hope and fight on."

On Aug 11, 2000, 73 former residents of Blocks 2 and 3 who filed a negligence suit against seven of 10 defendants.

They won the suit. An appeal was filed and the residents again won on Dec 3 when the Court of Appeal upheld a High Court ruling that Arab-

Malaysian Finance Bhd and three others are liable for losses suffered by the 73 former residents.

Another appeal from the defendants is pending in the Federal Court.

Following the Highland Towers apartment block collapse, the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council came under fire from all quarters.

After the recent landslide which destroyed Ismail's home, residents have taken the local council, which only has one qualified engineer, to task.

Residents blamed the local council, headed by the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council president Ahmad Kabit, for not solving the problem despite several complaints of flash floods in the neighbourhood earlier.

It is obvious that the Highland Towers tragedy remains a lesson unlearned.