Menara Umno certifiers issued stern warning
MalaysiaKini.com
June 27, 2013
By Susan Loone

The Penang Municipal Council (MPPP) has issued a stern warning to the certifiers - architect and engineer - of Menara Umno to submit their report on what caused of part their structure to fall during a violent storm which hit Penang on June 13, killing two.

NONEMPPP building director Yew Tung Seang said there are still concerns from the public about a structure from the roof top and the building owner, JKP Sdn Bhd, has been given two weeks, till July 8, to submit its report on the matter.

Yew said JKP has also been told to submit an independent report, which they have appointed the Public Works Institute of Malaysia (Ikram) to produce, on the structure failures by July 23.

MPPP had issued a notice under Section 82 of the Local Government Act 1976 to JKP a day after the incident, Yew said, to get rid of the continuing "safety nuisance" (kacauganggu) and to restore the building immediately.

"Immediate action has to be taken, especially on the reinforced concrete beams and a piece of iron which appears to be in a dangerous position on the rooftop,' he added, at a press conference today.

NONEHowever, when asked if the building would be closed to the public pending the submission of there reports, Yew (right) replied in the negative.

To the question if MPPP would be responsible if another mishap were to happen in the area, Yew said it was the responsibility of the certifiers.

"We are the over authority but the certifiers are the designers and creators of the building," he answered.

Accompanying him were state executive councillor Chow Kon Yeow and MPPP secretary Ang Aing Thye.

Only ‘brief report’ received

According to Yew further, MPPP had also, on June 14, sent a letter asking the certifiers responsible for the building - architect TR Hamzah and Yeang Sdn Bhd and

engineer consultant Tahir Wong Sdn Bhd - to submit a report in seven days on why the structure failed and safety measures and restoration efforts taken.

Four days later, Yew said MPPP issued another letter to the architect, engineer consultant and JKP that a building check must be carried out immediately and a detailed report be submitted to the council.

"However, the next day (June 19), the architect, engineer and building owner submitted only a brief report to MPPP, which we received on June 20.

NONE"The report states that Menara Umno is safe to be occupied. But MPPP was not satisfied with the report issued by the architect.

"On June 21, we visited the site and found that there was an external dilapidated structure which is nearly detached from the upper part of the building and we ordered JKP to rectify it at once," he said.

Yew said JKP had complied with the order and repaired that part of the building by June 24.

However, he said MPPP issued another reminder to the architect and engineer consultant to submit a more detailed and complete report to the council.

"We want them to report in detail how and why there is failure to the structure, and this would be in line with Section 258, Uniform Building By-Laws 1984."

MPPP had issued the 21-level Umno building a planning permission on Sept 30, 1995, and construction work started on Dec 23, that year.

Hawker buried beneath crater

The building, with a lightning rod on the roof top, sits on a plot of land owned by the Penang Islamic Affair Council and is leased to JKP for 99 years.

The building plan was only approved on July 30, 1997, and a modified one approved on July 23, 1998.

It obtained a certificate of occupancy on Jul 27, 1998, was launched on Aug 11, by then prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohammad.

NONEMPPP had issued a periodic review notice to the owner JKP on May 10, 2011.

JKP has appeal for an extension to appoint an engineering consultant but up to now, no report has been submitted.

JKP chief executive Adzmi Ariffin said the company was willing to be taken to court if it was found to be negligent in failing to submit a periodical building audit to the local council.

Hawker Lim Chin Aik (above), 44, is believed to be buried beneath a crater created by the falling lighting arrestor, as parts of his Honda City was found in the debris along Jalan Macalister where the building is situated.

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