

BN government approved all Penang hillslope projects, state records show
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KUALA LUMPUR, July 10 — Penang Island Municipal Council (MPPP) records show that 37 hillslope projects were approved under the Barisan Nasional (BN) administration between 1985 and 2008 when the Pakatan Rakyat (PR) coalition won power in the state.

According to declassified documents made available to The Malaysian Insider, 19 hillslope projects commenced development after Lim Guan Eng's administration took over in March 2008, but they had been approved under the Penang Structural Plan 2007, and are part of the 37 given the nod by Tan Sri Dr Koh Tsu Koon's government.

Lim has slammed The Star for picking on Penang over hillslope projects. — File pic
The records were released after the PR state government came under intense criticism in recent weeks for allowing the continuation of the 19 hillslope projects above the administration's mandated 250 feet (76.2m) threshold.

Penang Chief Minister Lim refuted these allegations yesterday, saying that these projects were listed as "special projects" by the previous BN government, which "cannot be rejected solely because they are above 250 feet".

In the MPPP report, it was stated that from April 2008 to May 2012 the 19 projects were listed under the special projects category of the state structural plan 2007.

The report stated that the 19 projects had either been given "prior plan approval" or were based on a MPPP Development Control and Planning Master Plan approved on September 13, 1996.

Amid demands from state opposition BN leaders and the public for the current Penang government to take responsibility for the projects, Lim had yesterday said that cancelling the projects would "bankrupt the state" as the developers would need to be compensated.

Lim said that the state's hillslope geo-technical committee had instead drawn up "the most stringent guidelines in the country" to mitigate the projects' effects, which were "imposed retrospectively" on developers.

MCA-owned The Star newspaper has been leading news coverage on the issue with a number of front-page stories and a special report recently describing the situation as Penang's "crying hills".

Lim had slammed the daily for only picking on Penang and not highlighting hillside projects in BN-ruled states.

The DAP secretary-general has also invited the daily's group chief editor Datuk Seri Wong Chun Wai to a dialogue on the issue.

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