

DEVASTATED

# FAMILY LOSES MATRIARCH IN BLAZE

Grandson finds out about fire through online news portals

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**M**ICHEAL Yee had hoped that his 83-year-old grandmother, Teo Hoi Foo, would get the best of care at a nursing home.

However, it only lasted for two months. Yesterday, he found out about the fire that killed his grandmother and four others through online news portals.

"My aunt discovered the nursing home when it first opened and we decided to send my grandmother there because we wanted her to be well taken care of. She was one of the pioneers at the nursing home," the 40-year-old said at the Kajang Hospital mortuary here yesterday.

Yee said he only found out about the tragedy at 12.30pm, adding that he did not know the

nursing home was operating illegally.

Four senior citizens and the home's 25-year-old caretaker perished in the pre-dawn fire at the nursing home in Sungai Long.

The victims were identified as Leow Chong Fatt and Kwan Sak Seen, all in their 60s, and Lai Sew Yin, who was in her 70s. The Pakistani caretaker was identified as Awis Muhammad.

Another occupant, Lim Chin Fatt, in his 70s, survived the incident.

Yee said he and his family had earlier visited the scene to confirm the news.

At 3.30pm, four people believed to be the victims' relatives visited the mortuary. They spent less than five minutes there before leaving the premises with teary eyes.

A woman was devastated by the death of her father as he only started staying at the nursing home last month.

The woman, who only wanted to be known as Leow, 40, said she sent her ailing father to the nursing home as he was in a coma and needed special care. She paid RM3,000 every month to the nursing home.



A group of people believed to be family members of victims at the Kajang Hospital mortuary yesterday. PIC BY KHAIRULL AZRY BIDIN

Earlier in the day, firemen had the harrowing task of removing the charred remains of the victims from the two-storey bungalow, which had been converted into a nursing home.

The victims were bedridden. Kajang police chief Assistant Commissioner Ahmad Dzaffir Mohd Yusoff said the fire was believed to have started from the living hall and firemen were deployed to the scene at 5am.

He said three other caretakers and Lim escaped. Lim was taken to Kajang Hospital for treatment due to breathing difficulty.

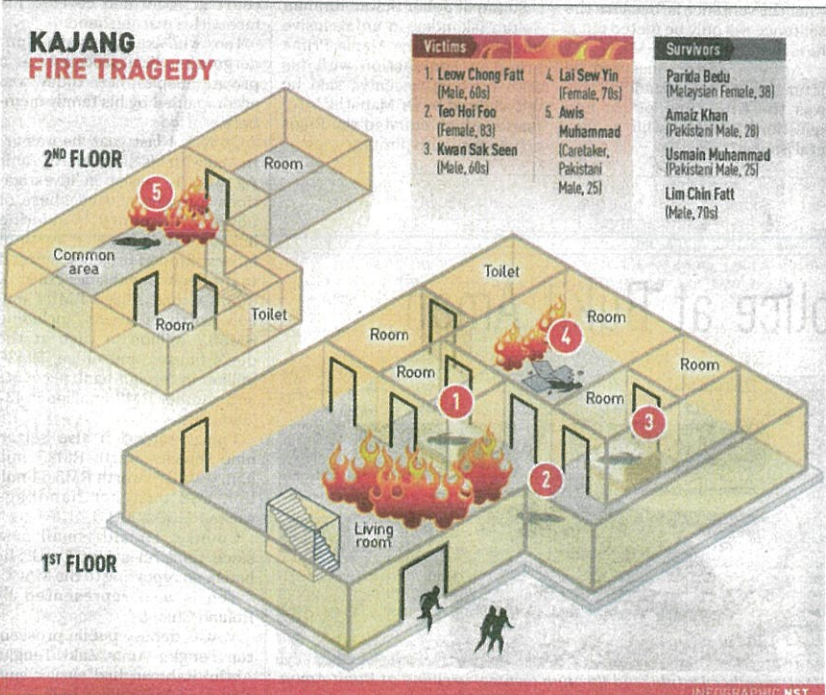
"The occupants were asleep when the incident happened. When they realised it, the fire was already raging," he said.

Kwan and Chong Fatt's bodies were found on the bed in their rooms, Lai was found buried under a rubble in her room and Teo was found sprawled on the

floor in front of Kwan's room. All of them were on the ground floor.

Awis's charred remains were found at the hall on the second floor.

Earlier, firemen had to break the fence to gain access to the house as the road was too narrow for fire engines to pass through as there were cars parked along the sides of the road. **Additional reporting by Esther Landau**



## SMALL OPERATION

# Operators 'did not know permit is required'

**KAJANG:** There were some tense moments at the scene of the fire here yesterday as the nursing home's operators showed up and had a hard time explaining to the authorities about the legality of the facility.

The operators, a Pakistani couple in their 30s, were heard explaining to Social Welfare Department officials that they did not know a permit was required for a small operation such as theirs.

"My friend told me that if it's fewer than five patients, I don't have to apply for a permit," the woman was heard as saying.

However, the officer was heard telling her that she should have consulted the authorities instead of taking her friend's advice.

The woman, who declined to be interviewed, admitted that she had no idea about the regulations.

Residents said the nursing home was only set up two months ago.

Selangor Social Welfare Department director Mohammad Hanafi Maulud said the department would investigate the operators under the Care Centre Act 1993.

They can be fined RM10,000 and sentenced to two months' jail if found guilty.

Page 1 pic: Fire and Rescue Department personnel inspecting the nursing home in Kajang.