



# JONG-UN COULD CLAIM BODY

VICTIM'S REMAINS

Should no next of

kin surface,

N. Korean leader

has legal right to it

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**T**HE clock is ticking for Kim Jong-nam's next of kin to claim his body.

Now that police have confirmed the North Korean man was the estranged half-brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un, standard government protocol in handling an unclaimed body has kicked in.

The Health Ministry protocol, laid out in a circular in 2008, states that unclaimed bodies of non-Muslims be kept for 14 days, after which the body would be handed over to the relevant religious authority for final rites.

In the case of Jong-nam, whose identity was confirmed on Friday, the path is clear for his next of kin to claim his body.

On Friday, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Khalid Abu Bakar, in confirming Jong-nam's identity, said "police were done with the body" and would hand over custody of the remains to the Health Ministry.

This, said a source involved in the handling of Jong-nam's body, effectively made Jong-un one of the rightful claimants.

"If by any chance (Jong-un) decides to do so, the body can legally be handed over to him. In the event immediate family members come to claim it, the decision on

which party will get custody will be referred to the attorney-general." A police source said in the case of a foreigner, the respective embassy had to be informed. The embassy, said the source, has the right to claim the body of any of its citizens if the next of kin did not claim it.

"When a body is not claimed after a certain period of time, police will have to notify the embassy. Only when the embassy declines to claim, or does not respond within reasonable time, would Malaysian authorities decide what to do," the source said. This was partly confirmed by Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman, who said: "Eventually,

we will have to surrender the body to someone, either the (North Korean) government or the next of kin. We will work on that when the time comes."

Meanwhile, Anifah said Malaysia will begin formal talks with North Korea in the coming days on the return of nine Malaysians barred from leaving Pyongyang, following indication from the North that it was ready to start negotiations.

"The time and date has yet to be confirmed. They (North Korea) want to start talking. We do not know what their demands are... we need to figure out what we can do to get the best result," he said at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations yesterday.

Members of those stranded in North Korea after meeting family members of those stranded in North Korea. Foreign Ministry officers had held three unofficial discussions with North Korean officials recently in preparation of the formal talks. Anifah gave his assurances that the Malaysians in Pyongyang were in "good health and high spirits", adding that they were free to move about and lead normal lives.

"Wisma Putra is in constant communication with them. The North Korean government has given us an assurance of the safety of all Malaysians in North Korea." Additional reporting by Balqis Lim and Arfa Yunus

Datuk Seri Anifah Aman (centre) with family members of those stranded in North Korea at the Institute of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations in Kuala Lumpur yesterday. PIC BY AIZUDDIN SAAD

