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Dr M: Tests on hillslopes being done, residents need to be patient

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Residents affected by major landslides in Bukit Antarabangsa have been advised to be patient while authorities carry out tests on the stability of the hillslopes.

"I realise these are trying moments but please be patient," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad urged the residents today.

"Although they (the local authorities) have taken the corrective measures, there is still a lot of water flowing down the slope," he said.

"It (the water) passes over loose earth and when it rains, it makes the ground softer and there is this danger of more collapses.

"It's not safe up there and people should accept the fact that they need to move out for the moment. We are not certain what is going to happen next," he said.

The Prime Minister was speaking to reporters after visiting Jalan Bukit Antarabangsa, the only main access road which was blocked due to several landslides early Saturday, following an overnight thunderstorm.

Among those present were Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Abu Hassan Omar, State Exco member Datuk Fuad Hassan, Selangor Deputy Police Chief Datuk Mohd Noor Hamat and officials from various authorities.

On arrival, the Prime Minister was given a briefing by geotechnical consultant Dr Gue See Sew, who is the managing director of SSP Geotechnics Sdn Bhd, on measures undertaken.

The entourage later went up to the affected site.

At a Press conference later, Dr Mahathir explained that the slopes were extremely steep following the landslide and a 17-storey apartment block was now situated very close to the edge of the slope.

"It's soft earth and the rocks are broken ... it's not even solid rock and this aggravates the situation.

"They (the residents) should move out and accept that there will be some inconveniences.

"They (the residents) can stay at hotels and the State Government has made the necessary arrangements to ensure discounts for those affected," he said.

On whether there would be a freeze on hillside development, Dr Mahathir replied that this had already been implemented and announced by the State Government.

Maybe, he added, the Government must now seriously consider whether hillslopes and hilltop developments must be subjected to more stringent regulations when approving projects.

"Maybe we can limit the height of buildings, ensure that the slopes are well treated.

"From what I have seen, it is quite obvious the slopes are very unstable," he said.

Asked whether last weekend's incident could have been foreseen, Dr Mahathir recollected a conversation he had with his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

"At the last Highlands Towers (tragedy) anniversary, my wife had met relatives of victims and after that she had written a letter to the New Straits Times reminding readers of unmanaged hillslope development.

"When she learnt that I was coming to visit Bukit Antarabangsa, she said that she knew then that something like this could happen again.

"If she could think such, I am sure there are others who would have also

thought likewise.

"But we (Malaysians) have always been very casual," he said.

The Prime Minister said: "Bila senang kita lupa kesusahan, bila susah kita menangis, mintak kerajaan tolong."

(We forget miseries in good times, when the going gets tough we cry, we seek help from the Government.)

(END)