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Mahathir-Landslides

PM ADVISES HILL-TOP CONDO DWELLERS TO EVACUATE

KUALA LUMPUR, May 19 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, who visited the scene of landslides at Bukit Antarabangsa here, today advised residents of the Athenaeum on the Peak condominium there to evacuate for their own safety.

"If they fear for their safety, then they should evacuate because if it rains, the earth will loosen further and cause more landslides and perhaps even casualties," he said.

Speaking to reporters later, Dr Mahathir said the affected residents should not think only about the comfort of living in their own homes but instead look at the landslides as a mishap.

Several landslides occurred on the slopes of Bukit Antarabangsa last Saturday rendering apartment blocks at the Athenaeum and Wangsa Heights unsafe for occupation.

"This is like a misfortune. Can't be like before. Can't think so much about the comfort of own homes. Here we see a luxury condominium. Every day we get to see squatter homes being razed by fires," said Dr Mahathir.

He acknowledged that the Bukit Antarabangsa slopes close to the two buildings were very steep.

"The rocks are fragmented, so not very reliable," he said.

Asked whether hill-slope development would have to be stopped, the prime minister said it was up to the state governments to decide on this.

However, Dr Mahathir said the government would certainly want to see development on hill slopes be subjected to stricter conditions including better treatment of steep gradients.

On whether land matters should be under the jurisdiction of the Federal Government, he said land was a sensitive matter.

"It (land) is a sensitive matter because land matters are under the state. Some states may not want to give up anything," he said.

The prime minister said that even his wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali had predicted that an incident like the 1993 Highland Towers tragedy would recur one day.

"During the last Highland Towers anniversary, my wife wrote to the New Straits Times after meeting Highland Towers residents, she only used her initials. As I was coming here today, she said had expected such as a mishap to occur. If she can think that way, I reckon many others think likewise," Dr Mahathir said.

During the hour-long tour of the area the prime minister was accompanied by Selangor Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Abu Hassan Omar, chairman of the Bukit Antarabangsa Emergency Committee and state executive councillor Datuk Fuad Hassan as well as Ampang Jaya Municipal Council president Mohamad Nik.

At the close of the press conference, about 50 condominium dwellers present shouted "Hidup Mahathir" (long live Mahathir).

-- BERNAMA

RA RYN