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## Courting disaster with lip-service

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LAST Sunday's flood, which inundated many parts of Kuala Lumpur and the Klang Valley, was not the first in recent years but was certainly among the worst.

It seems that as the city expands sideways, upwards and underground, floods occur more regularly and with devastating effects.

Property loss is mounting. So is the time taken and money needed to clean up and make repairs.

It is a matter of time before lives will be at stake as these successive floods worsen. Lives had been lost in the past. But as with all disasters in our country, nobody really pays great attention until a lot of lives are lost and among them relatives of important people.

Even so, our sense of sadness and anger is usually short-lived.

Take the case of the collapse of Highland Towers in December 1993. All kinds of promises were made and rules introduced supposedly to avoid a repeat of the tragedy.

But soon after that, hill slopes were deforested and cut to build even higher residential towers. Wholesale deforestation and hill cutting were halted, albeit temporarily, and only when the Prime Minister commented on them in the Press.

Some day, nature will make us pay dearly for our endless lip-service and our habit of cutting corners to maximise profits.

Take the long standing problem associated with the illegal clearing of State forests for the cultivation of ginger in Karak, Pahang. Successive Menteri Besar had promised that action would be taken to end the illegal cultivation and to relocate the farmers.

It has long been proven that illegal farming is not only causing soil erosion but is also threatening the stability of the highway that passes through the area.

But nothing much has happened. In the meantime, with the availability of cheap imported workers who can be ordered to undertake dangerous tasks, more State land in the area is being deforested.

The question is, does it need a fiat from Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad before the Pahang Government acts on its promises?

Or do we wait for another disaster?