

'Hillslope development work of former BN gov't'

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By Susan Loone

Penang Chief Minister Lim Guan Eng confronted his detractors today, declaring that the hillslope developments in the state were the unfortunate legacy of the previous BN government.

In his welcome speech at the private screening of a documentary on urbanisation, titled Urbanized, Lim said habitat protection required rigorous enforcement and restrictions for hillslope development.

NONEThe Pakatan Rakyat government was proud of its record of not approving any hillslope development and has asked the local authorities to ensure compliance.

"I have been informed by the two local authorities that hillslope developments were either approved or undertaken by the previous state government," Lim said.

"Unfortunately, such approvals given by the previous state government are still in legally in force and the procedures that follow from such approvals usually cannot be stopped," he added.

Lim said as a rules-based government, the present Pakatan Rakyat state government has to observe the laws and respect the approvals given, even though these were made by the previous state government.

"Those who try to pin the blame on the state government for hillslope development should explain why they gave approvals in the first place," he added.

'18 years of apathy and neglect'

Recently, the state government had been criticised for hillslope developments in Tanjung Bungah and Sungai Ara.

Various residents groups have been voicing their unhappiness on the current state of development in Penang, and a Penang Island municipal councillor, Lim Mah Hui, has also voiced his opinion on risky developments.

As for the traffic congestion in the state, Lim said this was the result of policy failures and leadership apathy and neglect over last 18 years, problems that could not be tackled overnight.

The state government was of the view that efficient public transport was the most coherent and effective method to reduce traffic congestion, in line with the principle of moving people, not vehicles.

"Unfortunately the state government has no control over public transport, which is under federal jurisdiction," he said.

However, the state government, through the Penang and Seberang Perai municipal councils, has taken several measures to address the problem.

These include forcible clamping and removal of vehicles that block traffic, synchronisation of traffic lights and redirection of traffic flow, widening of roads and building lay-bys and connecting roads to expand vehicular access.

Long-term measures include at least four major infrastructure structure projects to provide four-lane highways to link heavily congested areas, including a third link between Gurney Drive

and Butterworth through Malaysia's first undersea tunnel.

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