

PM: Scrutinise hillslope projects

The Star - 2/6/2006

BUTTERWORTH: Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi has called for tighter scrutiny of hillslope development plans in the wake of the landslide in Ulu Klang, Selangor, that flattened an Indonesian settlement on Wednesday.

The Prime Minister also instructed the Public Works Department to make hill inspections and to take the necessary measures to prevent future disasters.

"Developers who have projects on hill slopes must ensure that trees are not cut to the extent that soil erosion was at risk," he told newsmen after the launch of the Bumiputra Entrepreneurial Expo Pulau Pinang 2006 yesterday.

He said action must be taken against developers whose projects trigger landslides.

"If no action is taken, then developers would continue to adopt a negligent attitude towards hillslope development, and there will be a recurrence of landslides," he said.

On the cause of the Ulu Klang landslide, Abdullah said he had been

informed that it could be due to a retaining wall near the Kampung Pasir settlement giving way after the ground had been softened by past rainfall.

In Kuala Lumpur, Housing and Local Government Minister Datuk Seri Ong Ka Ting said all relevant agencies have been given two days to submit their reports on the Ulu Klang landslide to the Central Management and Natural Disaster Aid Committee headed by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Tun Razak.

"The Government views the matter seriously. We are waiting for the investigation reports," said Ong who visited the disaster site yesterday.

He said the matter would be discussed by the Cabinet at its meeting next week.

"Under the Street, Drainage and Building Act, developers who cause earthwork failure can be fined RM500,000, jailed 10 years, or both," he said.

According to Ong, Ulu Klang has been classified an environmentally sensitive

area, and "it is learnt that they (the developers) have applied for approval from the environmentally-sensitive area committee under the Selangor government."

"But how the retaining wall collapsed is being investigated," he said.

Deputy Education Minister Datuk Hon Choon Kim said the ministry would help the 20 students affected by the landslide.

"I have instructed the Gombak Education Department to give them textbooks, stationery and uniforms," said Hon who also visited the site.

Education Minister Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Tun Hussein, who is overseas, extended his sympathies to the victims.

"I hope the aid given will help ease the burden of the families so that the students can return when schools reopen," he said.

He said students from Kampung Pasir in need of help could contact the ministry's schools division or the Selangor Education Department.