

PLANNING AND MAINTENANCE A MUST TO PREVENT LANDSLIDES

THE article that appeared in the 10 March 2012 (Saturday) issue of The Star by the Director-General of the Public Works Department, Datuk Mohd. Noor Yaacob, is very timely in reminding the public, as well as the engineers and various authorities involved in hill-site development, on the importance of the recommendations made in the National Slope Master Plan (NSMP). The Institution of Engineers, Malaysia (IEM) lauds the initiative by the Public Works Department and other authorities, as well as the support given by the Works Minister towards the NSMP. The IEM fully supports the NSMP and has also been actively reaching out to educate the public and various local authorities on the dangers of hill-site development as well as ways to mitigate the dangers of landslides.

In addition to the recommendations made in the NSMP, the IEM has also drawn up specific engineering guidelines that emphasise on the investigation and planning that needs to be done prior to any development on hillslopes. The Institution is of the opinion that it is the proper engineering input during planning and design that is of paramount importance in reducing the dangers of landslides, and hopes that the relevant authorities will adopt its recommendations and guidelines as part of their standard hillslope development requirements.

Furthermore, all requirements should be effectively enforced and the best way to do it would be through a central federal agency that is empowered to work with the many authorities that are responsible for hillslope development. Amongst its many functions, this central body will have the following roles:

1. To advise the Local Authorities on the approval and control of the safety of all future developments on or adjoining slope sites.
2. To monitor and track the implementation of registered recommended mandatory maintenance procedures/programmes and to advise the Local Authorities to implement such maintenance procedures/programmes in the event that the relevant responsible parties fail to do so.
3. All developments, falling under the jurisdiction of the Agency, shall be required to obtain the consent of the Agency prior to the development being issued with the required certification for occupation by the Local Authorities.
4. All proposed land use conversions to residential and commercial purposes in the country shall take into account hill-site safety issues and shall follow advice from the Agency.
5. If necessary, the technical department of the Local Authority may need to be upgraded in order to have efficient communication with the Agency for effective implementation.

The IEM believes that legislating engineering guidelines and ensuring that they are implemented is pivotal in the effort to mitigate the dangers of landslides and to avoid the unnecessary death and destruction that often follow. The Institution is ready to assist the government in its efforts to set up such a body as well as in the many other efforts to ensure safe hill-site development. ■

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