



KEMENTERIAN TENAGA DAN SUMBER ASLI

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## Steps to lower landslide risk

### Report: Mitigation can help avert another Batang Kali tragedy

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**PETALING JAYA:** The forensic report on last year's devastating landslide in Batang Kali, Hulu Selangor, has proposed mitigation and prevention measures that include the development of a slope hazard and risk map for state roads, which is similar to federal roads.

This is among the suggestions put forth in an effort to reduce the risk of similar incidents, as stated in the forensic report made public by the government yesterday.

"On top of this, regular inspections and maintenance of road assets should be carried out periodically," said the report published on the National Disaster Management Agency (Nadma) website.

The 143-page report – prepared by the Slope Engineering Branch of the Public Works Department under the Works Ministry – also found that the slope and road maintenance in the area concerned had been carried out according to schedule.

The report also suggested that the branch be empowered to lead investigations into all landslide incidents.

Apart from that, it was recommended that the National Slope Master Plan (2009-2023) be extended for the next 15 years.

"This is to enhance an effective slope management plan for reduc-

**“This is to enhance an effective slope management plan for reducing risks and loss of property.”**

Forensic report

ing risks and loss of property and lives due to multiple hazards and climate change," it said.

Also recommended is for the enforcement of the Act and Guidelines for Camping and Recreational Sites to be strengthened.

The report was released a day after the statement by Deputy Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Ahmad Zahid Hamidi, who chairs the Central Disaster Management Committee, that said the tragedy was triggered by heavy rainfall with no evidence to indicate that it was caused by human intervention.

The report concluded that the incident, which claimed 31 lives, was caused by natural causes.

It stated that rainfall and seepage flow were among two significant factors that triggered the landslide in Batang Kali.

"Major rainfall events for five

days can have a significant impact on the environment," it said.

It added that another triggering factor that influences landslides is the change in the seepage flow regime.

Seepage flow refers to the movement of water through porous materials such as soil or rock.

Meanwhile, victims and experts said the report has failed to answer vital questions, especially on why land development was allowed in the area.

A spokesperson for the victims, who only wanted to be known as Wong, said they already knew that the landslide was caused by heavy rain.

He also claimed that an environmental impact assessment (EIA) report done in 2012 had deemed the site unsafe for farming and campsites.

"We want more answers from the government and better counter-measures to ensure no more lives are harmed," he said when contacted.

The University of Nottingham honorary associate professor of geography, Dr Lim Teckwyn, called on the government to open a royal commission of inquiry to further investigate the incident.

"The government should also declassify old maps that highlight risky and hazardous areas so that the public will be better informed," he said.

Lim added that road works and a poor drainage system could have been contributing factors.

"A landslide once occurred in the area in 2005 after roads were newly built. The forensic report did not mention this at all," he added.

EcoKnights conservation group founder Yasmin Rasyid said hazardous or sensitive areas should be published and made known while climate risk assessments are carried out to ensure land is stable.

On Dec 16 last year, a landslide struck the Father's Organic Farm campsite along the Batang Kali-Genting stretch in the wee hours of the morning, affecting 92 victims; 61 of them were rescued.

Following that, a special committee was set up to carry out the investigation based on the National Slope Master Plan (2009-2023) and decisions by the Cabinet.

The committee was led by the Slope Engineering Branch and joined by other technical agencies such as the Minerals and Geosciences Department and the Survey and Mapping Department.

Others that were also part of the committee were the Irrigation and Drainage Department, the Meteorological Department, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia and appointed professional bodies.



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