New technology won’t let rocks slip through net

Kuala Lumpur: North-South Expressway users need not worry about landslides and rocks falling as PLUS Expressways Bhd (PEB) has installed five debris flow nets in two high-risk areas.

The technology, from Switzerland, is the first ever to be used by a Southeast Asian country and has been installed in Jelapang and Gua Tempurung and cost PEB RM5 million.

Rings of highly-galvanised steel link together, forming a sturdy net to withstand boulders barrel-ing down at 25 metres per second and weighing three times the weight of the net.

The nets can last for at least 60 years.

PEB has identified a few other priority areas, including Muaikil in Segamat, and expects to complete net installations by year’s end.

Stressing on preventative and not curative maintenance, PEB has set aside RM475 million, up from last year’s budget of RM490 million, to introduce other technologies to conduct inspections and assessments of the roads.

A Real Time Monitoring System is also part of PEB’s preventative-maintenance targets.

Installed in six locations spanning the NSE, the system measures the rainfall intensity in the selected areas and the data is transmitted to PEB headquarters to be analysed for long-term and short-term measures.

The system will be installed in another 64 locations by the end of the year.

PEB chief operating officer Nik Ariza Nik Jaffar said: “Universiti Sains Malaysia, Universiti Putra Malaysia and Nottingham University are constantly conducting research on increasing efficiency and effectiveness of maintenance methodologies.

"Collaboration with local and international universities have produced two robots called R80 and R600 for drainage-culvert inspection as it is impossible for a human being to enter these drains."

PEB operates 971km or 64 per cent of all tolled expressways in the country.

Managing director Noorizah Abdul Hamid said the company constantly strives to upgrade and upkeep road facilities.