

Healing the hillslopes

Management units needed, minister tells local councils

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SERDANG: Many local councils do not have their own hillslope management unit despite the various hillslope development under their jurisdiction, said Works Minister Datuk Seri Shaziman Abu Mansor.

Shaziman said it was crucial for local authorities to have their own slope units with geological engineering experts so they could prevent landslides.

"The Local Government and Housing Ministry has issued a guideline on hillslope development in 2009. But I believe this is not enough if there's no one to enforce it," said Shaziman after visiting the site of a landslide at the Universiti Putra Malaysia here yesterday.

"To my knowledge, only a few local councils such as Ampang Jaya and Kajang have their own hillslope units with engineers and experts. Some, such as City Hall, have only a small unit and is lacking in manpower.

"Many of these landslides do not happen right after a building is constructed. Sometimes, it occurs 15 to 20 years later. This is because there is no maintenance conducted on the hillslope.

"It does not mean that if a building is certified fit upon completion, it is safe forever. Maintenance and monitoring must be conducted consistently every few years," he said, urging the local councils to set up their own hillslope units.

On Friday evening, a 1.5m retain-



Can't let it slide: Shaziman (right) inspecting the landslide site at UPM in Serdang. — Bernama

ing wall at one of the students' hostels at the university collapsed following a downpour, damaging 15 motorcycles.

Although the students were able to retrieve eight motorcycles, seven others were extricated from the rubble only yesterday with the help of an excavator.

Shaziman later gave the owners of the seven motorcycles a personal contribution of RM500 each.

Meanwhile, UPM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Fauzi Ramlan assured students and their parents that the university was safe, including the affected hostel.

"Our geological engineering experts conducted an immediate check on all areas within the campus last night and declared it safe. All structures are intact. So, parents need not worry," said Dr Mohd Fauzi.

The students, whose vehicles were damaged, would also be compensated, he said.

"The amount will be no less than RM1,500. One student was supposed to be sitting for his examination when it happened. We have allowed him to defer it," he said.

The UPM incident was the latest in a series of landslides in the country over the past few days.