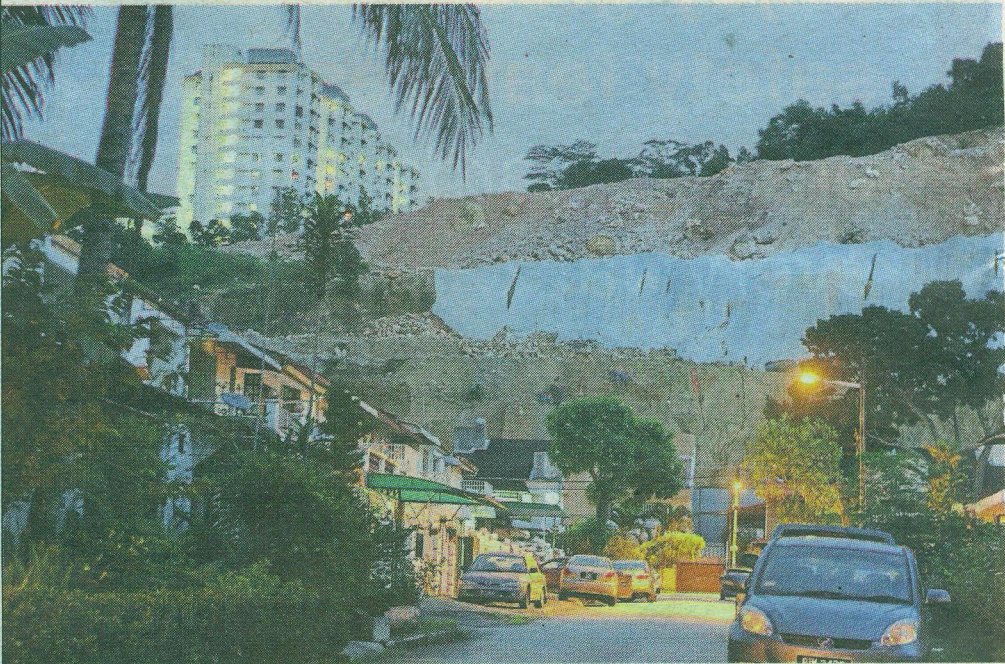


Review laws to oversee slopes



Prevention: Tarpaulin sheets covering a hill slope to stop erosion in Paya Terubong, Penang.

Group: Local authorities need more clout to go after errant contractors

By **NEVILLE SPYKERMAN**
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PETALING JAYA: Local authorities have no clout when it comes to checking slope-cutting on private land, says a community-based organisation for slope safety.

Programme director at Slopewatch, Eriko Motoyama, said a lot of slope-cutting was happening in places that were outside the local authorities' jurisdiction.

"It is sometimes done by people who may not have slope engineering expertise," she said, adding that as a result, there could be erosion, landslides and mudslides.

Motoyama said the laws, including the Street, Drainage and Building Act 1971 (Act 133), had little emphasis on slopes and hills.

"These need to be reviewed to give local authorities the power to go after errant contractors and private land owners," she said.

Slopewatch is run by residents who monitor slopes in their neighbourhood and conduct simple maintenance of those areas.

The Government has taken measures to identify vulnerable slopes that may cause problems during the monsoon season or whenever it rains heavily.

Universiti Putra Malaysia's Civil Engineering Department Assoc Prof Dr Biswajeet Pradhan said several federal-funded projects were underway.

Studies were being conducted in Kajang, Bukit Antarabangsa, Cameron Highlands and Ipoh, he said.

Other vulnerable areas included Penang Hill and some slopes along several federal highways, he added.

Dr Biswajeet said airborne laser scanners were being used to create maps that showed the high risk areas.

Tenders for the creation of such maps for Kota Kinabalu and Kundasang in Sabah had been issued by the Government, he said.

"The projects should be completed by the middle of next year and then mitigation works will start."

The Star reported yesterday that the authorities and some communities were keeping a watchful eye on risky slopes during the rainy season.

There are some 600 such slopes in Kuala Lumpur alone, according to reports.

Also, many developers have been told to make sure they have taken steps at their construction sites that are near slopes to prevent landslides.