

Stakeholders to moot for a centralised body to handle hillslope management

By The Editor / TheEdge

09 Apr 2014, 01:26 pm



THE EDGETM
MALAYSIA

Last Updated: 6:55pm, Apr 09, 2014

KUALA LUMPUR (April 9): Various industry stakeholders are mooting for the establishment of a centralised body to oversee hillslope management in government.

The Expert Standing Committee on Slope Safety, a body consisting of industry experts and stakeholders, will be promoting the idea at a hillslope management seminar on May 7 in order to spark debate among governmental agencies, experts and the public for such an idea.

G&P Professionals Sdn Bhd CEO Datuk Dr Gue See Sew said today there is a need for a body to help the 149 local authorities manage hillslopes and proposed development on such environmentally sensitive areas.

"The local authorities don't really have the expertise needed to tackle hillslope management and we hope to help them with the issue by establishing a centralised body to oversee all such related matters," he said after a press conference on the **Slope** Management Seminar scheduled for May 7.

"We will be bringing up the issue at the seminar to get the debate going and see where we can go from there," he added.

Gue said although there are guidelines and state planning laws on hillslope development, it can be improved.

"Is it too complicated to be abided? Is it too technical? So we hope we can get the necessary feedback from the seminar," he added.

Hillslope management became a pertinent issue after the tragedy of the Highland Towers near Taman Hillview, Ampang in December 1993.

One block of the apartment complex collapsed due poor maintenance of amenities at the **slope** coupled with days of heavy rain.

Since then, more than 12 cases of major landslides have occurred across the nation.

There are various guidelines in local planning laws which specify the need for controls and checks on development at steep **slopes** between 26 degrees to more than 35 degrees.

Despite this, local authorities receive high density development proposals from developers eager to construct residences on hillslopes.

Local Government Department Buildings Control Division director Ahmad Redza Ghulam Rasool said the common perception is that local authorities are solely responsible for hillslope management but this is not accurate.

"We all have a role to play to reserve our **slopes**. Even though we have all these guidelines, the perception is that it is for the local authorities (to enforce)," he

said.

"But actually, it is supposed to be a practise for developers, consultants and so on," he added.

He said although state governments have its own guidelines, resulting in slight variances across states, basic principles are present.

"For example, there must be an independent check on the design and specifications of the building," he said.

NGO **Slope** Watch programme director Eriko Motoyama said there is a noticeable difference when local authorities deal with complications occuring on **hillslope** government-owned land as opposed to lands owned by third parties, suggesting action is swifter on government-owned **hillslope** land.

"When local authorities deal with issues land owned by governmental agencies or the local authority itself, they (local authorities) will come in and find the funds, find contractors and fix it as fast as they can," she said.

"But when it comes to land owned by third parties, they will issue letters, warnings and so on which sometimes gets ignored and causes difficulties for the local authorities chasing after them.

"But with **slopes**, you can't just ignore it. These problems get worse with time. So how do you address this? Is our legislation empowering local authorities to effectively deal with lands that do not belong to them? Meanwhile, residents living at the foothills are complaining that landslips are still occuring in their backyard," she added.

She said these systemic problems needs to be addressed.

"The system is there, it just needs to be improved," she added.

All three, along with other individuals, will be speaking at the seminar.

It is organised by the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB) and the Local Government and Housing Ministry.

Tickets for the public is priced at RM150.

For further information, contact Ang BE at 012 611 7820.

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