

Best lessons from landslide

I HAD originally planned to dedicate this whole column to the latest landslide in Hulu Kelang, but decided against wasting precious space – not only because much has already been written about it, but unless things change, I don't want to be accused of flogging a dead horse.

This does not mean that the incident is unimportant and that the deaths of four members of a family, including a three-year-old girl are any less tragic than the 48 deaths in the Highland Towers collapse 13 years ago or the Bukit Antarabangsa landslide in 2001 which killed eight people.

But, you see, one can easily come to the conclusion that just like its predecessors, this tragedy too will soon be in the darkest and furthest recesses of our memory.

There's no use dwelling on it because the powers-that-be will continue kidding themselves and the rest of us that "action will be taken"; "remedial steps have been adopted"; "a committee will be set up to monitor hillslope development"; "all hillslope projects will be suspended" or "applications for hillslope projects will be reviewed".

What in truth will happen – and you don't need Ladbrokes or your friendly neighbourhood football bookie to tell you the odds – is that

all these promises, like the ones made before, will soon be forgotten and more people will die.

Moreover, now that the Federal Court has ruled that the Ampang Jaya Municipal Council (MPAJ) cannot be held responsible for the Highland Towers collapse, despite issuing certificates of fitness – local councils have in effect, obtained a licence to renege on their duties ... all together now ... "Malaysia Boleh!"

Now here's something to cheer us up a little – Football!

One of my first assignments when I started off as a cub reporter in The Malay Mail 10 years ago, was to attend the opening of a sports bar by the late footie hero George Best.

Best, despite his achievements on the field (as well as off it) had never played in a World Cup.

(A native of Northern Ireland, his country never qualified for the World Cup when Best was playing).

When posed this question, his response went something like this: "It doesn't matter if it is the World Cup, the FA Cup or a local pub league. You have to play your best. Although I didn't play in the World Cup, I know I played damn good football everywhere else, and that's all that matters".

The following day, I breached

my journalistic code of conduct when I asked Best for his autograph.

As he signed "Best wishes, George", and offered me a beer, he asked if I understood what he meant at the previous day's press conference.

"It does not matter what you do but you've got to do it well."

"Do I feel I missed out on the World Cup? Of course! But I'm not going to wallow in it as I played great football in other tournaments and helped my team win."

See, you can learn something even from a self-confessed womaniser/alcoholic/football legend.

I wished there was more time for Best to impart his words of wisdom, but by then, the PR girl told me that my five minutes were up (I didn't realise I was being timed, and judging from Best's scowl, neither did he) and that a queue had begun to form behind me.

Well, it has been almost a year since Best went to the Premier league in the sky.

His autograph vanished when I moved house but his words still ring loud and clear.

Whether you are a top rate footballer forced to play against a Second Division team, or a seasoned journalist covering a kindergarten concert or a council planning officer going over approvals

Down to Earth

by Terence Fernandez

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Best said: 'It does not matter what you do but you've got to do it well.'

for a multi-million ringgit hillslope project above a squatter settlement – you have to do what you have been entrusted to do and give it your all.

It's an easy undertaking if your motivation is a whole lot of pas-

sion and a tinge of conscience.

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