

Bentong roads open to traffic

ALL CLEAR:

Traffic resumes on both carriageways of Km52.4 of KL-Karak Highway

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ROADS and highways around Bentong affected by mudslides on Wednesday were fully operational by 2pm yesterday.

Works Minister Datuk Fadillah Yusof said he had received reports that safety checks had been completed, and traffic could resume.

On Saturday, Km52.4 of the Kuala Lumpur-Karak Highway resumed operations on its eastbound carriageway, which was split into a two-way path, while the westbound car-

riageway underwent final repairs and safety checks.

Both carriageways were opened to traffic yesterday, while other toll-free roads around Bentong have also been opened to traffic.

Government agencies and members of parliament involved in tackling the mudslide will be called for a post-disaster meeting by the National Disaster Management Agency.

Minister in the Prime Minister's Department Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim said the meeting would be held on Thursday, and would delve into countermeasures and preparedness of the respective agencies.

Shahidan visited the site of the mudslide yesterday and climbed up the slope where tonnes of the mud and debris came crashing down on the highway on Wednesday.

He said further investigations were needed to determine its cause.

"I managed to get up to where there was the check dam, but from what we saw, we can estimate that



Datuk Seri Shahidan Kassim (centre) climbing up the slope to inspect the site of the landslide at Km52.4 of the Kuala Lumpur-Karak Highway yesterday. Pic by Mohamad Shahril Badri Saali

there is a water source further up the hill," said Shahidan.

"That is where the investigations need to be done, to determine the flow of water, and then, we can take preventive measures to avoid a repeat disaster."

Shahidan said the National Disaster Management Agency's investigations were not related to finding activities that caused the disaster, but rather to establish preventive measures.

"From the visit today (yesterday), I can say that a measure that can be immediately taken is to build more check dams on various levels of the slope," he said.

"Because there are two rivers that flow out of this hill, I am sure there is a water source further up that may be behind the flooding."

Shahidan said the government would look into increasing the strength of the Special Malaysia Disaster Assistance and Rescue Team (SMART) team in view of the rising number of non-traditional disasters in the country.

"The SMART team requires a different type of training, and the number of personnel is very small.

"It has only 141 personnel. In view of the disasters we are facing, we should increase the number to at least 500."