GEO urges public to stay vigilant against landslides before wet season

The Geotechnical Engineering Office (GEO) of the Civil Engineering and Development Department (CEDD) today (March 28) announced that a total of 145 landslides was reported to the Government last year, less than the 214 cases in 2020 and the annual average of about 300 landslides over the past 25 years. There was no landslide-related casualty in 2021. However, the public are reminded to remain vigilant against the risk of landslides and private slope owners are urged to carry out slope maintenance before the wet season.

The landslides reported last year mainly affected roads, footpaths, squatters and buildings. Two Landslip Warnings were issued by the Hong Kong Observatory in 2021. During the rainstorm on October 8, the Landslide Potential Index value reached 72 and landslide risk category of "very high", but fortunately no casualties were caused.

The Head of the GEO, Dr Raymond Cheung, reminded members of the public that when the Landslip Warning is in force or under prolonged heavy rain, motorists should avoid driving in hilly areas or parking vehicles in front of slopes. Pedestrians should avoid walking or standing close to steep slopes, and avoid standing between slopes and structures. When notification to evacuate is received, people should follow rescuers' instructions and move immediately to a safe shelter. If members of public witness a landslide, they should leave immediately and call the police if conditions permit.

More information can be found in the leaflet entitled Landslide Self-help Tips on the CEDD's website (www.cedd.gov.hk/filemanager/eng/content_450/CEDD_Leaflet_2017_English.pdf).

Dr Cheung specifically reminded private slope owners to arrange for regular inspection of their slopes and carry out necessary maintenance works before the wet season, and to pay attention to site safety during the works. Depending on the type and condition of the slope, maintenance works include the clearance of accumulated debris from drainage channels, unblocking of weep holes and outlet drainpipes, and repair of cracked or damaged slope surface cover.

Slope owners can refer to the leaflet Keep Your Slopes Safe online (www.cedd.gov.hk/filemanager/eng/content_450/keep_your_slopes_safe_eng.pdf) for more details.

The GEO is committed to improving the quality and enhancing cost effectiveness in the design of slope upgrading works as well as adopting suitable innovative designs and new technology. Mitigation measures are usually used to tackle natural terrain landslide risks, such as constructing concrete rigid barriers or steel flexible barriers at the hill toes. Over 500 debris barriers were constructed by the GEO under the Landslip Prevention and

Mitigation Programme. The two debris barriers located at the natural terrain at Middleton Towers, Pok Fu Lam, and Pa Mei, Lantau, successfully intercepted significant amounts of debris from a landslide last year, thus protecting the toe facilities from damage. Apart from maintaining the highest standard of slope safety, the GEO is keen on providing landscape treatments to all man-made slopes upgraded and natural hillside mitigation measures implemented under the Programme in order to make slopes look as natural as possible to blend in with the surroundings.

Apart from educating the public to take necessary precautions when the Landslip Warning is in force, the GEO is dedicated to raising public awareness of slope safety and climate change through public education, regular publicity events, public information services, as well as the Landslide Sci-Tech Chamber in the Po Shan Drainage Tunnel.

Fifty years ago, two tragic landslides happened on June 18, 1972. The GEO is planning to launch a series of public education activities for remembrance of the disaster that occurred half a century ago, in order to remind the public and the younger generation that Hong Kong is still under the threat of landslides. The public should also remain vigilant to landslide hazards due to urbanisation, slope degradation and the influence of extreme weather.