Consider geological factors in building designs – UMS

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KOTA KINABALU: There is a need to engage policy makers and local authority in the research of natural disasters so that the outcome of the research can be applied to building designs and disaster management.

Dr Rodeano Hj Roslee, senior lecturer of engineering geology and geohazard in the School of Science and Technology at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS), said the university could only carry out research and he hoped that stakeholders such as the local authority could utilise the research outcome on construction, including management of disaster risks and risks analysis.

"There is a need for continuous research, which we also have to engage policy makers and stakeholders like PBT (local authority)," he said.

Rodeano said our country had not considered factors such as earthquakes in building design all the while.

"When the earthquake happened in June this year, there was a lot of structural damage, especially in Ranau.

"With the introduction of a building code, we can minimize damage and more importantly, reduce fatality, if any."

He said this in a press conference before the opening ceremony of a Natural Disaster Seminar organized by Natural Disaster Research Centre, Faculty of Sciences and Natural Resources, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS).

Rodeano was also the organizing chairman of the seminar, which was officiated by the Tourism, Culture and Environment Minister Datuk Seri Panglima Masidi Manjun.

He said the 5.9-magnitude earthquake in Ranau had caused worse damage in Ranau compared to Kundasang. This was mainly because of the Pinousuk gravel in Ranau, which was unstable, he said.

"We found that all past designs did not take into consideration geological factors and building code.

"There is a need for geological input in building plan and design, to identify the safe areas, as well as disaster management and evacuation methods."

Rodeano said public awareness to enhance the preparedness of the community was also important to reduce panic so victims could rescue themselves and prevent death. He said the two-day seminar, which ended yesterday, was the third edition since 2013 with the aim to provide a platform to share technology, expertise and research in natural disasters.

Some 137 participants, including five Taiwanese, a Singaporean and an Indonesian, took part in the seminar. A workshop on building codes against earthquake was held on Tuesday.

"We hope the workshop can provide a starting point (to highlight) the importance of building code that takes into consideration natural disasters, especially earthquake."

Rodeano said a Letter of Intent (LOI) was also signed between the Faculty of Sciences and Natural Resources, UMS and Kao Yuan University, Taiwan.

Rodeano

He said the LOI entailed the sharing of technology and transfer of expertise in the field of natural disasters between both universities, which included earthquake early warning system, research on seismic design code for building and bridge, and platonic and seismic potential assessment.

"The LOI may be extended to a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) in the future," he said.

The seminar also included a site visit to Melangkap in Kota Belud, Mesilau in Kundasang and Ranau town to inspect the structural damage caused by the earthquake in Ranau in June.

"So far 20 participants have registered and we limit the number of participation to 35."

Aside from earthquake, the seminar also covered tsunami, landslide and climate change in its discussion.