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Form Three pupil feared drowned in fall from bridge

MALACCA, Sat. - A 15-year-old was feared drowned after falling from an uncompleted bridge linking the mainland to the man-made island of Pulau Melaka early today.

Mohd Faisal Hassan, a Form Three pupil of Sekolah Menengah Sultan Muhammad in Batu Berendam, was out with four friends to celebrate Merdeka when he fell at about 1am.

The 300-metre RM10 million bridge is a favourite fishing spot and at least five people had drowned after falling from it in the past five years.

The boy's father, Hassan Drus, 41, of Padang Jambu near Bukit Baru, when met at the scene, said he had suspected something was amiss when his son was not back by midnight.

"At about 1.30am, police arrived at my house and told me that my son could have fallen off the bridge. I immediately went to the scene and have been keeping vigil here since."

The police are being assisted by members of the marine police, the Fire and Rescue Department, the Civil Defence Department and the Special Forces unit from the Sungai Udang camp in the search and rescue operation.

More than 30 people are participating in the operation and the authorities feared that following heavy rain early this morning, the boy could have been swept by currents to nearby islands.

The bridge is part of the RM2 billion Pulau Melaka project by Inno Enhance Sdn Bhd, a subsidiary of Larut Consolidated Bhd.

The project, involving the construction of two artificial islands, began in May 1996 after being launched by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

The reclamation has also resulted in the deletion of the Pulau Jawa shoal from the world map.