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School labs: `Learn lesson from Sabah'

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KOTA KINABALU, Fri. - As Anti-Corruption Agency checks on 1,200 school computer laboratories indicated structural defects in all, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said contractors for the projects in the peninsula could learn a lesson from their counterparts in Sabah.

The Prime Minister said contractors in Sabah had completed the laboratories on schedule and according to specifications. There had been no complaints about quality.

"As we all know, many computer laboratories in the peninsula were not properly built and had collapsed, but there is no such problem in Sabah," he told a Press conference at the Kota Kinabalu International Airport before returning to Kuala Lumpur after a day-long visit.

"I think it would be good if the contractors in the peninsula could come to Sabah to see how government projects were successfully implemented in the State," he said.

Sabah was allocated RM71 million for the construction of 200 computer laboratories, out of which 168 have been completed and handed to the State Education Department.

The remaining 32 will be ready by the end of the month. About 100,000 students will benefit.

In Johor Baru, ACA deputy director-general (I) Datuk Mohd Zawawi Mohd Nordin said the 1,200 represented half of the 2,400 laboratories nationwide.

He said checks had revealed that the laboratories either had cracks or did not have a stable foundation.

"The shoddy construction as detected, indicated that the laboratories are not safe for use.

"Our initial investigations have been carried out with the co-operation of agencies such as the Public Works Department (PWD). The purpose is to ascertain if the buildings are safe.

"Our investigation at this stage does not yet involve the arrest of anyone, or to determine who is at fault or responsible."

Mohd Zawawi was speaking to reporters after closing a forensic course on construction engineering jointly organised by ACA and Universiti Teknologi Malaysia here today.

He could not estimate how long it would take before the investigation could be completed because the process involved complicated expertise on construction engineering.