

Burst pipe forces Putrajaya's immigration dept closure
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Officials were left red-faced today after a burst water pipe forced the Immigration Department to suspend services to thousands of people and relocate foreign detainees.

Director-General of Immigration Wahid Mohamad Don said the department had turned away 3,000 people after the accident in the building, located in the administrative capital of Putrajaya.

"I am very disappointed with what's happening as we cannot provide services to the public," Wahid was quoted as saying by the state Bernama news agency.

Bernama said water from the pipe on the top floor of the seven-storey building had flowed all the way down to the second floor, while parts of the ceiling on the fifth floor had caved in.

Wahid said more than 600 officials had been sent to work elsewhere, while 150 foreign nationals in detention were relocated to immigration detention centres south of Kuala Lumpur and at the capital's international airport.

Poor design

The director of Putrajaya's public works department, Abdul Rahim Ahmad, said his staff were repairing the pipe and blamed the accident on lack of monitoring in the building, as well as poor design and construction work.

The incident is "shameful because it affects services provided by the government to the public," Abdul Rahim was quoted as saying.

Construction began in 1996 on the administrative centre south of the capital under the administration of former premier Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Built at an estimated RM22 billion, the project sparked criticism for excessive spending at the height of the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s.

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