

Parliament springs leaks
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Parliament today became the fourth casualty in a series of major structural problems involving government-owned buildings.

Opposition MPs sprung to action after hearing of leaks at the foyer outside the public gallery at the Dewan Rakyat today. A total of six leaks were reported after heavy rain this morning.

"It's shocking. Of all places to hear of structural problems," said DAP MP Teresa Kok, at an impromptu press conference held near a large water-stained carpet late morning.

The leaks came from several holes in the plaster ceiling, leading to large stains on the plush red carpet outside the public gallery.

The media centre is located 15 feet away. A stream of photographers had congregated in turn at the water stained carpet throughout the day.

Bandar Kuching MP Chong Chieng Jen, also from DAP, who was at the press conference, quickly attributed the structural problems to the government's contract procurement process.

"Leaks are not a recent problem, which only just surfaced. We are getting RM0.50 worth out of every RM1 spent. This is the latest in a series government failures," he told reporters.

"There are no open tenders. Emphasis was reduced to the Bumiputera status, rather than quality. We can actually see the cons of such policies, and in Parliament no less," said Chong.

He added that the damage was not serious only because the rain was not heavy.

"We should get hold of these contractors, mete out some punishment to them," added Kok.

RM100 million for 6 leaks!!

Soon after, the Opposition supremo, Lim Kit Siang, did his own on-site inspection.

Without commenting, he did a walkabout amidst bewildered visitors that were lining up to enter the gallery.

Minutes later, at the afternoon debate session, Lim began: "RM100 million in renovations and we have produced six leaks!"

"If Putrajaya, the (Jalan Duta) courthouse and now Parliament is deteriorating, then we are seeing a systematic collapse of the government!" he shouted, to immediate jeers from BN MPs.

Parliament had undergone a structural overhaul three years ago.

Opposition MPs called deputy speaker Lim Si Cheng to "take immediate action" to fix the leaks.

"If the leaks can happen in a place like this, then what can we expect of other places," said M Kulasegaran (DAP - Ipoh Barat).

"DAP pun bocorlah!" said Moktar Radin (BN - Kinabatangan), after which the deputy speaker repeatedly called for calm and promise the leaks would be looked into.

Unending series of mishaps

In a press statement issued later, Lim said the leaks "is a repeat of the disgraceful incident in April 2005" referring to when Parliament had to be adjourned summarily because rainwater was pouring into the Dewan Rakyat chamber.

A ceiling had collapsed two years after the Parliament renovation contract.

"With the recent unending series of mishaps in public buildings and construction projects, like the [recent structural problems with government buildings] and now the return of leaks in Parliament building, Malaysian confidence in the safety of public buildings and construction projects have reached a new low," he said.

Last month, a ceiling had caved in due to a leaky sprinkler system at the Entrepreneur and Co-operative Development Ministry in Putrajaya, south of the capital.

Parts of a ceiling also collapsed at the brand new court complex in Kuala Lumpur after it failed to withstand the weight of heavy light fixtures.

In another incident, the Immigration Department was forced to suspend services to thousands of people and relocate foreign detainees after a burst water pipe inundated its building in Putrajaya last month.

Works Minister Samy Vellu had all pinned the blame on the contractors.

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