

Pak Lah wants PWD to probe defects

The Star - 13/4/2007

PM upset over burst pipe episode

By SHAHANAAZ HABIB, V.P. SUJATA
and MAZWIN NIK ANIS
newdesk@thestar.com.my

KUALA LUMPUR: The Prime Minister has expressed anger over what happened to the Immigration Department headquarters in Putrajaya, saying that something must be wrong for a new building to run into such problems.

"I am very unhappy with this kind of thing. I get very angry when new buildings have such defects. Surely, something's not right here.

"I want to know if the defect was there when the building was built," Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi told newsmen yesterday.

He said the Public Works Department had been asked to investigate the defects in detail.

"We will take action if there is any wrongdoing," he said after launching the Malaysia Anti-Corruption Academy.

A burst pipe caused havoc at the RM200mil Immigration Department headquarters on Wednesday, resulting in daily operations being suspended.

Operations resumed at 9am yesterday, when power supply was restored from the fourth floor downwards, which enabled transactions involving passport investigations and visa and permit applications.

Asked whether other government buildings in Putrajaya should also be checked, Abdullah said one of the weaknesses of government departments was that they lacked a building maintenance culture.

"They think if it is a new building they do not need to inspect it. But even if it is a new building, you must inspect it to see if there is something wrong," he said.

The prime minister added that maintenance and constant checks were important to pinpoint defects in buildings quickly and rectify them immediately.

"If there is no maintenance or scheduled inspections, then a small defect at the beginning can develop into a major one later on," he said.

Meanwhile, consultant engineer Stanley Y.W. Yong said abnormal vibrations might have caused the 32mm pipe to break, causing the massive flooding in the seven-storey building.

He said the vibrations might have resulted

»But even if it is a new building, you must inspect it to see if there is something wrong«

DATUK SERI ABDULLAH AHMAD BADAWI

from a sudden surge in water pressure due to "irregular operations" of the basement water pump in the building.

He said the maintenance company staff had informed Putrajaya Holdings (PJH) yesterday that "loud noises" were heard coming from the pipes a day before the incident.

"Suspecting vibrations on the pipes, we verified it this morning by carrying out tests.

"The timing of the water pump was also found to be too high. We have sent the pump and the pipes back to the manufacturer to conduct lab tests.

"We have yet to determine whether the pipe or the water pump, or both, caused the massive flooding," he told a press conference.

Yong said that the pipes were properly installed and there were no signs of "people hanging on to it nor were there signs of it being cut".

He also said that there was nothing wrong with the "design and installation" of the pipes.

"The developer followed strict requirements and followed the manufacturer's guidelines to the T.

"The place where the pipe had snapped was not at the joint but a few millimetres away, which is at the weakest point. In fact, the part of the pipe glued into the shoulder was still intact," he said.

Yong said an estimated 10,000 gallons of water had rained down the building for about seven hours before it was detected.

"If the incident had happened during the day, the leak would have been detected earlier and the extent of the damage to the building could have been minimised.

"Repairs would have then taken a few hours and it would have cost only RM200," he said.