

Penang's Batu Lanchang Market suffers structural damage

Free Malaysia Today

May 15, 2017

By Prededeep Nambiar

Two beams in the market's main building, which was opened by Dr Mahathir in 1986, are being supported by reinforcement beams while repairs take place.

GEORGE TOWN: A popular public market near Green Lane here has suffered major structural damage, prompting the Penang Island City Council (MBPP) to order some 40 traders there to evacuate their stalls.

The Batu Lanchang Market's main two-storey structure was found to have incurred cracks on two support beams near a retail section on the ground floor.

The building was opened by then prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad in 1986.

Chow Kon Yeow, the state executive councillor for local government, said engineers found the beams to be "stressed" and the affected area to be "dangerous" for occupation.

Of the 241 stalls in the market, 35 located near the two beams have been affected, and the traders operating there relocated to a temporary site while immediate repair works are carried out.

The damage was first detected on May 1 and the traders evacuated on May 4.

Chow allayed safety fears on the rest of the market, as engineers have deemed the rest of the complex safe for use.

"We expect repairs to be completed in three weeks to a month," he said during a visit to the site today.

Chow added that the top floor, which has a multi-purpose hall and a library, has been ordered to be closed to the public until repairs are carried out, and all "loads" such as heavy items have also been cleared from there.

Earlier, Chow and council secretary Yew Tung Seang showed reporters the affected beams.

Yew said scaffolds have been placed along the five aisles around the 35 evacuated stalls, with two 5-metre "I-beams" placed along the cracked sections for temporary reinforcement.

He said the area around the base of the affected beams is being hollowed out, so it can be reinforced with concrete.

“Our engineers are here around the clock to monitor every single column and beam to ensure the safety of the building.

“We are happy to report the damage is contained to a small area of the market, and business is running as usual,” Yew said.

The market, which is highly popular among Penangites for its wide variety of produce, poultry and hawker food, underwent a major renovation by the MBPP two years ago.

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Source: <http://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2017/05/15/penangs-batu-lanchang-market-suffers-structural-damage/>