

Ministry trying to get land for university

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■ Reports by Sulaiman Jaafar

THE Higher Education Ministry has discussed with the state Land and Mines Department about acquiring land for Universiti Malaysia Kelantan.

Its minister, Datuk Mustapa Mohamad, who is also Air Panas state assemblyman, said the university reflected Barisan Nasional's commitment to developing the state.

Speaking during the debate on the motion of thanks for the Sultan of Kelantan's speech, he said: "We promised in our 2004 general election manifesto that we would build a university if we come to power in the state.

"Although we failed (to win the state), we are keeping the promise to set up the university."

Mohamed Zaki Ibrahim (Pas-Kelabaran), when proposing the motion, had hit out at the ministry for announcing the site of the university in Bachok and Jeli without consulting the state government.

However, Mustapa said things were still at an early stage.

"We will be giving a briefing to all state assemblymen once the preparations are ready," he said.

Mustapa said the university was

temporarily operating at the Kota Baru Teachers' Educational Institute.

The first intake of 500 students will enrol next July.

The institute will be used as a temporary campus for at least two to three years, together with 31 shophouses at Taman Bendahara, in Pengkalan Chepa here, which will be leased by the government.

"An allocation of RM1 million has been approved for renovations at the institute," he added.

He also said the Federal government would not close the state Federal Development Department despite complaints as it was playing an important role in monitoring development projects in the state.