

500 to put up at temporary hostels

SOLUTION: Shophouses rented for students

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STUDENTS of Sekolah Berasrama Penuh Integrasi (SBPI) Kuantan will be placed in temporary hostels outside the school as five of its buildings have been declared unsafe following a landslide behind the girls' hostel.

Deputy Education Minister Dr Mohd Puad Zarkashi said the ministry had rented shophouses some 1.5km from the school for three months to house the 500 students, including 130 freshies.

"We will be using the state Education Department's buses to ferry the students to and from the school. Meanwhile, a retaining wall is being built at the site of the landslide at a cost of RM409,000.

"The Public Works Department (PWD) will continue to monitor the school once the wall is built as we are worried that another landslide may occur," said Puad after a meet-the-people programme in Punggor, Rengit, here yesterday.

The landslide was believed to have been triggered by flash floods on Christmas Eve.

In the incident, the girls' hostels, staff quarters, the principal's house and the dining hall were affected and declared unsafe.

Puad said the PWD forensic team conducted two inspections in the area, including one on Friday, be-

fore declaring the buildings unsafe.

In another development, Puad said seven schools in Kelantan would be closed today because of floods.

The schools are SMK Rantau Panjang, Sekolah Agama Bantuan Kerajaan (SABK) Diniyah Bongor, SABK Al Falah Siram, SK Sri Rantau Panjang 1, SK Sri Rantau Panjang 2, SK Rantau Panjang and SJK(C) Khay Boon, Rantau Panjang.

"Other schools will be open as usual. The Tumpat district education office has been put on alert after flood and strong wind warnings were issued for the area," said Puad, who is Batu Pahat member of parliament.

He also said the ministry was studying a new school model in flood-prone areas to minimise loss of property and equipment.

"The new model will see only an open hall built on the ground floor while classrooms, offices and computer rooms will be located on the upper floors.

"For schools that are used as flood relief centres, we will provide more facilities, such as bathrooms. These are the ministry's long-term plans to minimise the losses that the government has to suffer every year as a result of floods," he added.

He said this year, 39 schools in Terengganu and 25 in Kelantan were affected by floods.



A portion of the damaged retaining wall yesterday, which collapsed at a residential college in Universiti Putra Malaysia in Serdang on Friday. Pic by Mokhsin Abidin

Local councils need more experts to monitor slopes

SERDANG: More slope monitoring and maintenance units should be established in local councils to study earth movements.

Works Minister Datuk Seri Shaziman Abu Mansor said although Kuala Lumpur City Hall, Petaling Jaya City Council and Ampang Jaya Municipal Council each had slope units, they were inadequate considering the number of active slopes in their territory.

Shaziman said while minor monitoring and maintenance of a slope was quite easy, inspecting the moisture level, strength and the level of stress the slopes were facing required expertise.

"We need engineers and geolo-

gists to take the necessary measures to prevent a tragedy, as the most important measures are prevention and early detection.

"Monitoring and maintenance should be an ongoing process because landslides do not usually happen during the construction period but 15 or 20 years after the construction is completed."

Shaziman said that guidelines on slope maintenance and development were established by the Housing and Local Government Ministry in 2009.

"However, enforcement is an issue because of lack of manpower. The Public Works Department is monitoring and maintaining up to

21,000 active slopes across the country, but we lack experts to oversee all the slopes at the same time," said Shaziman after inspecting a collapsed retaining wall at a residential college in Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM) yesterday.

The wall collapsed during a downpour on Friday, damaging seven motorcycles.

Shaziman presented a personal contribution of RM500 to each of the seven affected students.

UPM vice-chancellor Prof Datuk Dr Mohd Fauzi Ramlan said that all buildings in UPM had been inspected and found to be safe. He said UPM was looking into ways of helping the affected students.