

# PAM urges school operators to not compromise on building safety standards

Rachel Chew | EdgeProp.my

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❗ Ezumi: It is time for the local authority to assist these building owners and operators to improve their building safety as we do not want to have another similar tragedy happening in our country. (Photo by The Edge)

KUALA LUMPUR (Sept 15): The Malaysian Institute of Architects (PAM) has urged school operators to not compromise on the safety standards of their buildings following recent fire incidents in the country.

“Again, we are saddened by the loss of more lives in a fire incident on Sept 14 in addition to previous incidences in Subang Jaya in February this year and another six lives in the Hospital Sultanah Aminah fire in Johor Bahru in October last year,” said PAM president Ezumi Harzani Ismail in a media release today.

It was reported that more than 20 children lost their lives in a blaze at the Darul Quran Ittifaqiyah religious school in Datuk Keramat, Kuala Lumpur (<http://www.theedgeproperty.com.my/kuala-lumpur/>) at dawn yesterday. Darul Quran Ittifaqiyah is one of many private religious schools in the country. The final death count has yet to be ascertained.

“This is not the first time a fire incident happened at tahfiz centres or religious schools. Among the incidents involving tahfiz centres or religious schools previously reported recently are Sekolah Menegah Agama Maran in Pahang, Maahad Tahfiz Al-Quran Al-Ismailiah in Kelantan, Sek Men Maahad Al Islah in Perak (<http://www.theedgeproperty.com/my/perak>), Maahad Tahfiz Al Baraqah in Selangor and Maahad Tahfiz Al Quran Wartabiyyatul Islamiah in Kedah (<http://www.theedgeproperty.com/my/kedah>),” Ezumi said.

While there is demand to have more religious school and hostel buildings, he stressed that the operators of the schools should not compromise on safety standards of the buildings.

“Under the Fifth Schedule in the Uniform Building By-Laws (UBBL), these school buildings and hostels fall under ‘Purpose Group II – Institutional’, where the safety factors have to consider the building provision for living accommodation of the occupants. Hence, the dead end limit for travel distance for this purpose group should not be more than six meters,” Ezumi explained.

He added that in the case of the tahfiz school, which is also used as a dormitory, even more stringent requirements for emergency exits should apply where dead ends are not permitted so, there must be minimum two exit doors from any room with occupancy of more than six persons.

“Each such building must also be equipped with two or more staircases depending on the layout of the building. Besides these passive safety designs, there are many other fire safety requirements that need to be fulfilled to ensure the safety of the buildings and its occupants, such as illuminated emergency exit signs, heat and smoke detection systems, fire alarm, fire extinguishers, hose reel and emergency light.

“It is time for the local authority to assist these building owners and operators to improve their building safety as we do not want to have another similar tragedy happening in our country, especially one that involves school children. PAM is willing to offer our help to work together with the local authorities, Bomba or other professional bodies to assist in building safety education and consultation to improve the fire safety aspects of our buildings,” Ezumi concluded.

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