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KUALA LUMPUR, SEPT. 7 (BERNAMA) -- DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAHAD WANTS THE ULTRA-MODERN ISLAMIC CENTRE COMPLEX, EXPECTED TO BE COMPLETED IN JANUARY, TO BECOME THE SYMBOL OF PRIDE OF THE MUSLIMS IN THE COUNTRY.

IN THIS RESPECT, THE PRIME MINISTER STRESSES THE NEED FOR IT TO BE WELL-MAINTAINED TO PRESERVE ITS BEAUTY.

+THERE'S NO USE HAVING A BEAUTIFUL BUILDING IF THERE IS NO MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME.

+AS SUCH, A SPECIAL BUDGET SHOULD BE PREPARED FOR THIS, + HE SAID AFTER ATTENDING A BRIEFING DURING A VISIT TO THE \$37 MILLION COMPLEX, SITUATED NEAR MASJID NEGARA.

AT THE BRIEFING, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO GAVE HIS VIEWS ON WAYS TO BEAUTIFY THE CENTRE, INCLUDING THE PLANTING OF FLOWERING SHRUBS AND TREES.

THE PROJECT'S CONSULTANT ENGINEER, NIK MOHAMED NIK MAHMOOD, IN HIS BRIEFING SAID THAT THE COMPLEX WOULD HAVE, AMONG OTHER THINGS, AN AUDITORIUM, MUSEUM, LIBRARY, RECORDING STUDIO, MALL AND LECTURE HALL. --- MORE

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THE MALL, WHICH COULD ACCOMMODATE 6,000 PEOPLE, COULD BE USED FOR QURAN-READING COMPETITIONS WHILE THE AUDITORIUM, EXPECTED TO BE READY IN MARCH, COULD ACCOMMODATE 1,430 PEOPLE, HE SAID,

ISLAMIC CENTRE DIRECTOR DR ABDUL HAMID OTHMAN SAID THE FIRST FLOOR OF THE 11-STORY OFFICE PODIUM BLOCK WOULD BE FOR BANK ISLAM WHILE THE REST WOULD BE USED BY THE ISLAMIC CENTRE.

THE PRIME MINISTER SPENT MORE THAN AN HOUR INSPECTING THE PROJECT WHICH WAS NOW 70 PERCENT COMPLETED.

HE WAS ACCOMPANIED BY MINISTER IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DEPARTMENT DATUK KHALIL YAKUB, DEPUTY MINISTER IN THE PM'S DEPARTMENT DR YUSOF NOR AND DEPUTY FEDERAL TERRITORY MINISTER ENCIK AHMAD SHAH TAMBAKAU. -- BERNAMA