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Mahathir-City

GIVE LINEARCITY PROJECT A CHANCE, SAYS MAHATHIR

KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 29 (Bernama) -- Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today the KL LinearCity project, set to be developed from early next year, should be given a chance.

He said: "They (the developers) have promised to maintain the cleanliness of the river and the project is attractive because it is sophisticated and unusual, and might become a feature of Kuala Lumpur."

Asked if Kuala Lumpur needs such a project, the Prime Minister said: "Why not? Is there any reason why it doesn't need it?"

Speaking to reporters after witnessing the signing of two agreements on the project, he said there would always be protests whenever a project was to be carried out.

"Let's give them a chance. Just like we asked to give Michael Jackson a chance," said Dr Mahathir referring to the protest over the superstar performing in Kuala Lumpur.

The KL LinearCity project is an integrated development covering a 12km stretch of the Klang River beginning from Jalan Tun Razak to Kampung Pasir in Jalan Klang Lama.

The project integrates an efficient transportation, quality infrastructure and beautiful environment.

Estimated to cost between RM5 billion and RM10 billion, the project is expected to be implemented in phases over a 20 to 25-year period.

Asked if the project would cause a property glut, Dr Mahathir said even with the many buildings built, there were still people wanting to stay in them.

"If we look at Kuala Lumpur in 1970, there were not many people and buildings then, but when we started building there were people who came to stay and pay rent."

Asked why the LinearCity project was shrouded in secrecy, the Prime Minister quipped: "Because we were afraid of the press."

"You know, when the press gets something to grip on and make an issue of, it'll become an issue."

"For example, we plant palm trees, you show a picture of the palm trees being knocked down by a car. Whatever you plant, if a car hits the tree, it will fall down."

"But you have now work yourselves into a frenzy over palm trees, as if the Datuk Bandar can no longer sleep (referring to a recent newspaper cartoon). The Datuk Bandar is sleeping soundly, only the pressmen cannot sleep."

Under a development agreement signed between the government and KL LinearCity Sdn Bhd, the government would entrust the company with a 12km stretch of Klang River for an integrated urban development and beautification programme.

The government also signed another agreement with KL PRT Sdn Bhd to undertake the construction, maintenance and operation of a 16km long and elevated intra-city public transit system called "People-mover Rapid Transit" (PRT) for a concession period of 30 years.

KL LinearCity will immediately undertake a river cleaning and improvement programme to rehabilitate the river and to incorporate a 1-in-100 year flood immunity to the river basin.

About 1,000 squatters affected by the development will be resettled to low-cost houses.

Phase 1 of the KL LinearCity development will begin in early 1997 with the construction of GigaWorld, a unique urban leisure and tourist destination that spans 2.4km, making it the longest building in the world.

Construction of section 1 of the PRT monorail system running from Pekeliling Bus Station to Jalan Tun Sambanthan is expected to begin next month and be completed by 1998 or 1999. -- BERNAMA

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