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A city in a garden

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MOST CITIES in the world grow organically. They were never meant to be cities in the first place. Kuala Lumpur too, became a city by chance, developing with the population influx, concrete jungle and traffic jams. But Putrajaya is not going to see any of those social hazards that come with a city - not if Putrajaya Corporation can help it. 'Putrajaya is a planned city. Everything is planned right from day one to provide not only infrastructure for the government administration but also to provide quality living and working environment,' says Putrajaya Corporation president Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin in an interview.

With 70 per cent of Putrajaya comprising parks, gardens, lakes and open space, it is not wrong when Azizan calls it a 'city in a garden'. Only a mere 30 per cent will be developed. A brainchild of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, Putrajaya, formerly known as Prang Besar, was chosen over other locations like Janda Baik in Pahang to be the new federal government administrative centre.

To ensure there is proper planning, Putrajaya Corporation was incorporated on March 1, 1996 as the local authority to shape the growth of the city in accordance to the vision of the government. Things that have often been talked about but not implemented in Kuala Lumpur like bicycle and walking lanes and restrictions on the entry of private vehicles into the city centre will take place in Putrajaya. 'The transportation system is one area where detailed planning and thought have been given. Only 30 per cent of the private transport will be allowed into the core area while the remaining 70 per cent will be public transport like the Light Rail Transit (LRT), buses and taxis.

'There will be expensive landscaping and hopefully this will encourage children and adults to walk or even cycle to schools and work places,' says Azizan. Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Putrajaya is its core area, which is divided into five precincts surrounding a 600-hectare lake. The five precincts are linked by a 4.2 km boulevard which forms the backbone of Putrajaya. 'The man-made lake makes living and working in Putrajaya special. With the ample greenery surrounding the lake, it makes the environment healthier,' says Azizan.

The five core precincts are the government precinct, mixed development precinct, civic and cultural precinct, commercial precinct and lastly the sports and recreation precinct. To keep the water clean for human contact, there will be a wetlands which will act as a natural sift for water coming into the lake from Sungai Choh and Sungai Bisa.

Putrajaya Corporation, as the local authority for Putrajaya the city, has also ensured that utility tunnels are built. This, according to Jebasingham Issac John, the planning and coordination director of Putrajaya Corporation, is to ensure there is no unnecessary digging of the roads. 'All the utility supply lines like the power and telecommunications cables will be laid at the utility tunnels. So any digging will be confined to the utility tunnels and not the roads,' he says.

Another concept Putrajaya Corporation is working on is having residential units without fences, a feature already seen in some exclusive property projects like Country Heights. Perhaps the icing in the cake for Putrajaya is that all the residential units, including the 10,000 low-cost units, will be connected to the 2.5 gigabyte to 10 gigabyte fibre optic line that is running through the Multimedia Super Corridor.

This in essence will confirm the status of Putrajaya as an intelligent city. In fact, houses in Putrajaya will have more IT features than any other scheme in the country. Azizan says Putrajaya will make life easier for all and this is where concepts like paperless government, smart schools and telemedicine will be implemented at its height. `All these facilities are just to make life easier for the public. For instance, information on government procedures will be easily available through computers. The need for physical presence will be reduced and so will cost and traffic congestion.

`We are even working on a project where payments can be made through booths or automated teller machines located in the streets or shopping complexes in Putrajaya,' he adds. Dismissing any suggestion that the geographical distance of Putrajaya will be a source of inconvenience for the public, Azizan says Putrajaya is strategically located as it is central between Kuala Lumpur and the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang.

`Many attempts to build a city have failed because of the distance. But Putrajaya is strategically located and is only 15 minutes drive from Kuala Lumpur. Also there are many modes of public transportation and access roads,' he says.

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