

01/10/1997

Attuning Malaysians to realise a vision

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PUTRAJAYA (MB, Sept 1 cover story), the much publicised futuristic city, has all the necessary ingredients for success and is poised to set a new standard of living and a change in lifestyles of the people living in and around it, thanks to the foresight of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad. This idealistic vision, conceived and nurtured in the 20th century, will transform Prang Besar into a well-planned and dynamic township of the 21st century.

Fundamental to its success is the concept that seeks to combine the best of both worlds, ie, the beauty of nature and the advances of modern technology. The concept of living in harmony with nature is a new development which is fast gaining popularity. Putrajaya seeks to take this concept a step further by blending the advances of technology with the delicate ecological system of nature. It is also unique in the sense that this is the first such project initiated by the government under its privatisation concept.

In order to ensure that Putrajaya lives up to its image of a futuristic city, detailed planning is required especially in the area of traffic management. It must avoid the setbacks of the traffic system of Kuala Lumpur, which due to its rather piecemeal and haphazard development, can hardly keep pace with the requirements of its 1.7 million population. Putrajaya seeks to introduce the 'park and ride' concept, supported by a fully integrated internal public transportation system with multiple entry and exit points. With only 30 per cent of private transport allowed into the core area, adequate parking facilities should be provided to its visitors, as otherwise, the situation would be similar to that of the present day Kuala Lumpur where parking is a major challenge to every motorist.

Another area which requires detail planning is waste management. A technologically advanced city would be meaningless if its people are not committed towards maintaining cleanliness. This commitment should be a joint effort with the local authority providing the necessary logistic and support facilities and its inhabitants demonstrating a genuine effort in keeping the place clean. Malaysians are notorious for their lackadaisical attitude towards cleanliness. This notoriety was displayed during the recent Merdeka Day celebrations where the area surrounding Dataran Merdeka was strewn with rubbish despite the availability of mobile rubbish bins. This is partly the reason why the government adopted the Virtuous Behaviour Towards A Successful Society theme as this year's National Day theme, because the lack of self resilience could lead to moral decay and destroy the structure of society.

With Putrajaya gearing itself to face the challenges of the 21st century, it may also be appropriate for the government to consider embarking on a parallel urban renewal programme for Kuala Lumpur to be transformed into a financial centre or a centre for meetings, incentives, conventions and events. Out of the 200,000 people who are going to live in Putrajaya by the year 2005, a sizeable portion would have originated from Kuala Lumpur. The buildings previously occupied by the government departments will be empty. There will be a reduction in vehicular and human traffic in Kuala Lumpur and the pace of life will be less hectic and stressful.

Undoubtedly, Putrajaya looks set to catapult Malaysia into a new era.

What is required now is to attune Malaysians to this new lifestyle.