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Cities need to redefine their philosophy: PM

CITIES will have to redefine their philosophy and identity of an improved quality of life, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said.

"This should be done as they wrestle with increases in population size, high-rise concrete structures, horrendous traffic and ever-increasing demands by citizens for services," he added.

Dr Mahathir said this in a message for the "Quality Urban Life '97" exhibition held in conjunction with a two-day South-South Mayors conference in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Acting Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim opened the conference and exhibition, attended by 400 participants from 22 countries and 120 companies respectively.

Dr Mahathir hoped the participants of the conference could come up with some solutions to the issues concerning cities.

"We are now in the era where technological and biotechnological changes have a profound impact on our lives. Coupled with the advances in information technology, the way we work and live will alter and with it our social values.

"Because of the large congregation of people, cities are most vulnerable to the negative impacts of rapid social change. Therefore, efforts must be intensified to mitigate these problems," he added.

Congratulating the Kuala Lumpur City Hall on the occasion of the city's silver jubilee celebrations, Dr Mahathir said Kuala Lumpur has come a long way and, like many cities of its vintage, has to face with the universal problems that accompany the country's rapid growth.

The problems include population density, traffic flow, air quality, squatters and a host of other social and physical problems.

Dr Mahathir also commended City Hall's ability to overcome the many problems associated with growth.

"Despite Kuala Lumpur being one of the fastest growing cities in Asia, City Hall has preserved and managed to help improve the different facets of the city and its life," he said, adding that City Hall's effort to host the conference in conjunction with its silver jubilee is timely and appropriate.

He also said the theme, "Quality Urban Living", is relevant to the cities of the world, particularly the fast growing cities of the Southern Hemisphere.

"The conference would no doubt provide a useful forum for facilitating the exchange of ideas, experiences and expertise as well as identification of problems common to cities worldwide," he said.

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