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Land gift to Federal Government

KUCHING, Tues. - Sarawak today presented a "gift" to the Federal Government in the form of State land totalling 808ha in Kampung Jaya Bakti, about 30km from Kuching.

Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud handed over the land titles to Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad during the unveiling ceremony of a RM900,000 commemorative arch which is erected at the same village.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir said the gift came as a pleasant surprise as it was not part of the morning's itinerary.

In thanking the State for its kind gesture, Dr Mahathir said he would inform the Federal Government about the gift and then decide on how best to develop it.

He said there was a possibility of constructing Federal Government buildings there.

Kampung Jaya Bakti, which is located in the Matang area, is relatively isolated with the famous Gunung Serapi and the Kubah National Park, and a few sparsely inhabited Malay villages.

Taib told those present that the gift was made by the State to demonstrate, among others, the State's commitment in helping to build a better Malaysia, enhance State and Federal relationship, and to ensure the success of Vision 2020.

He added that the Federal Government was given a free hand to develop the land the way it deemed fit.

On the arch, Taib explained that it was meant to signify the dawn of a new millennium and the gateway to vision 2020.

Among other things, the arch carries an inscription 1957 Jubli Delima Malaysia 1997 and boasts bronze bas-relief portraits of Dr Mahathir on one side and that of the first Prime Minister, the late Tunku Abdul Rahman on the other.

Taib said Sarawak had been able to enjoy development and prosperity because of its independence through Malaysia 34 years ago.

He said the rakyat in the State should be thankful for this because when the State joined the federation in 1963, it was regarded as the poorest and most backward in the country.

"Before (the formation of) Malaysia, we did not have any identity.

"When the Tunku (Tunku Abdul Rahman) brought us all together, our fate changed and we were then able to decide on our destiny," he said.

After unveiling the arch, Dr Mahathir planted a Medang Tija (a type of ornamental tree) before being driven to the Kubah National Park, about 7km away, for a closed-door meeting with tourism officials.

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