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PM: Our growth is well planned (HL)

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MIRI, Mon. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said Malaysia's drive to develop did not mean that it was spending beyond its means.

He said the country had to develop more rapidly as it had lagged behind during the colonial period.

In obvious reference to the more developed countries, Dr Mahathir said: "Some (countries) said that we were too ambitious and spent beyond our means but these people have already built their cities ... of stones and concrete and (their people) enjoy a higher standard of living than we do.

"Why must they have a grudge against us?

"They said we developed mega projects. I do not know why they call them mega projects. They are not very big.

"If we go to their places, we will see beautiful cities which have been there for 300, 400 or 500 years.

"They built all these things at the expense of the people who have to live like slaves because the lords and masters wanted to live in comfort and style and in excellent buildings," he said at the ground-breaking ceremony for Phase II of the "Miri City Fan" project at the Dewan Suarah today.

He said Malaysia had to work very hard to catch up with the more developed countries.

"We will not be able to catch up with them if we run at the same speed, and to run at a slower speed, of course the distance will be even greater.

"So, to catch up with those in front of you, you have to run faster than them."

He said the tower cranes which could be seen all over the country, including in Sabah and Sarawak, were symbols of the rapid pace of development.

He said the Government's ambition was to extend more benefits to the people to improve their earnings and living standard.

"To give our people a good life, to give proper accommodation and ensure that they have good shelter and food ... this is our ambition."

The Prime Minister also said there were certain people who claimed that the country's rapid development had resulted in "overheating".

"Actually, it's not overheating ... but a result of well-planned development."

He said the Government did not do anything to show off.

"We did not erect monuments," he said, adding that there were some small structures which did not require large allocations.

For instance, he said in Kuching, there should be something which would reflect its status as Sarawak's capital.

He said all developments, however, were carried out with proper planning.

Dr Mahathir also said Sarawak too had undergone substantial changes from the time it joined Malaysia in 1963 with its people enjoying a better standard of living now.

The Prime Minister arrived here from Kota Kinabalu this morning for a two-day visit.

The "Miri City Fan" project, a unique fan-shaped urban civic park covering 10.4ha, will involve the construction of several parks with names such as "Garden of Vision", "Islamic Garden", "Chinese Garden" and "Botanical Ethnic Garden".

It is designed to create civic consciousness.

The first phase comprising the Civic Promenade, similar to Kuala Lumpur's Dataran Merdeka, was opened in August last year.

Also present were Dr Mahathir's wife Datin Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohamed Ali, Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Abdul Taib Mahmud and his wife Puan Sri Laila Taib.

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