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PM: Emulate Putrajaya (HL)

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KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. - Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight called on township developers to pay attention to the man-environment-technology symbiosis, following the example of Putrajaya which is running on schedule.

Dr Mahathir, who launched the new city of Putrajaya at a glittering ceremony at the Putra World Trade Centre, said he was happy that the project was running smoothly.

"This project has become increasingly important, not only because it will be the new administrative centre of the Federal Government but also because of late, questions have been raised about Putrajaya, specifically on whether it would be launched or not.

"The launch gives a clear message that not every project in Malaysia has been frozen, what more the new administrative centre of the central government," he said in his speech.

He said Putrajaya Holdings Sdn Bhd and its partners - Malaysian Resources Corporation Berhad, Peremba, SP Setia, Hong Leong Properties and Malaysian Plantations - were confident that the project would not be hit by the attacks on the ringgit and stock market.

"In fact, their zeal has become stronger to ensure that the project will become a huge success," he said.

Putrajaya, a component of the Multimedia Super Corridor, is sited on a 4,000ha area in Perang Besar, Selangor, about 25km from Kuala Lumpur. Expected to cost RM20 billion, it is scheduled to be completed by 2005 and fully operational by 2010.

Dr Mahathir said he was glad that Malaysia had emerged stronger from taking on the economic problems.

"We have become poorer financially but at the same time, we are richer with determination to work hard and to unite to overcome difficulties.

"This determination is not merely confined to those involved in building Putrajaya but can be observed everywhere and is demonstrated by those proud to be Malaysians," he said.

Dr Mahathir, who also used the occasion to express his concern about the environment, urged new township developers to pay close attention to the symbiosis of man, the environment and technology.

He told them that this, however, must be a reality and not mere empty promises, and said they should take the example of Putrajaya where existing wetlands and waters sited on 585.6ha (12.8 per cent of the project site) had become a part of its identity.

This will enable Putrajaya to be within a sustainable balanced ecosystem.

"Wetlands can be designed as a natural filter for water flowing into the lake. It is also a place for research on wetlands and its inhabitants."

He said many cities in the world have developed so rapidly that man and environment have become unable to exist together. But Putrajaya will be meticulously planned to avoid this scenario and emphasis will be paid to the harmony of man, environment and technology.

"The task and challenge before Putrajaya Holdings Sdn Bhd and its partners is very heavy," he said.

However, the building of the city from scratch makes it less complicated than reconstructing an existing town or city. Putrajaya will also have the advantage of not having to inherit old technology or surroundings.

These Dr Mahathir said, could be obstacles to implementing new technology. Putrajaya will be built with the best and latest information infrastructure to support existing, new and to-be-invented technology.

"We will be sure that we are not putting Malaysia in a slow boat, from the aspect of implementing an electronic Government. Instead, Malaysia will be in the fast lane and able to grab opportunities brought by the Information Age."

With its comprehensive policies and plans on land use, transport, utilities, housing, public facilities, information technology, fields and parks, Dr Mahathir said he was confident that Putrajaya would rise from its 4,581ha site to become a city which was business-friendly besides providing quality urban life.

Putrajaya is slated to support at least 570,000 people, 300,000 of whom will be local residents.

The Prime Minister also said that while Malaysia was not interested in building monuments, statues or symbols of its success, she was not afraid of building practical structures, of which Putrajaya was one.

"But even in this, there are people who are jealous. This cannot be avoided because Putrajaya will become a city of the new millennium which we are building ourselves.

"It will be truly Malaysian. Putrajaya will be a unique city built with the Malaysian spirit and for all Malaysians," Dr Mahathir added.

Saying that Putrajaya would mirror the Malaysian spirit he said the world would see a successful symbiosis of man, environment and technology.

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