

15 SEP 1999

DR MAHATHIR OPENS NATIONAL THEATRE

KUALA LUMPUR, Sept 15 (Bernama) -- Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad tonight opened the National Theatre, listed as one of the 10 most sophisticated theatres in the world and on par with the Royal Albert Hall in London.

The RM210 million theatre, "Istana Budaya", is located at Jalan Tun Razak where the National Art Gallery and the National Library are also sited.

The 21,000 sq m building, with its roof shaped like a "tepak sirih" (a container for betel leaves and areca nuts) is equipped with state-of-the-art lighting and sound system and can seat about 1,500 people. It can stage plays 200 days a year.

Designed by architect Mohammad Kamar Yaakub, it has Malay cultural features with the interior using local materials like marble from Langkawi and high-quality tropical wood. Several paintings by national artist Datuk Syed Ahmad Jamal grace its walls.

A musical, "Keris Sang Puteri" was staged to mark the opening.

Present were Culture, Arts and Tourism Minister Datuk Abdul Kadir Sheikh Fadzir and other cabinet ministers.

With the state-of-the-art theatre, international theatre groups and ensembles are expected to be more willing to come here to perform.

-- BERNAMA

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