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Mahathir-Visit

MALAYSIANS CAN VISIT PUTRAJAYA, SAYS MAHATHIR

PUTRAJAYA, June 21 (Bernama) -- The new administrative capital, Putrajaya, will be open to all Malaysians to visit and see, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

"We want people to come and see their capital, we want them to see what we have done, we want them to be proud of this capital.

"We have several places of interest and my favourite spot really is the wetland, which is something quite remarkable," he told a news conference on his first day at his new office, here.

Dr Mahathir said Kuala Lumpur would remain the capital of Malaysia while Putrajaya, 40km from the city, would become the administrative capital.

From today onwards, the Prime Minister of Malaysia will be operating from a new office, after some 42 years operating at Jalan Datuk Onn since the country achieved independence.

Dr Mahathir -- the fourth prime minister of Malaysia -- clocked out of the old office on Friday and today, after a short prayer (doa) at the lobby of the prime minister's new office, he only had to flash his smart card in front of an identification device at the lift to his room.

The prime minister's office is located at the fifth floor under the largest green dome of the Prime Minister's Department building.

Dr Mahathir said that apart from the wetland, there were other attractions in Putrajaya where the people could take a boat ride in 7km man-made lake.

The lake is much bigger than the lake in Canberra, Australia. Putrajaya is the only inland town in this country which will have the marine police.

"No other capital actually designed the wetland into the whole area, and the wetland serves many purposes including filtration of the water getting into the lake.

"You may notice that the water in the lake is clean despite the fact that we have a lot of earthwork going on. The earthwork has not polluted the lake with a lot of silt and things like that," he said.

The prime minister said there would be guided tours for visitors to the government offices as well as the prime minister's residence.

"The prime minister's residence consists largely of public rooms where visitors will be entertained.

"The residence, incidentally, as I have said, has six bedrooms for my children, so I will have to ask my wife to have four more children because, for some reason or other, people consider that the prime minister should have six bedrooms for his children," he said jokingly.

"We will have proper tour guides and it will start as soon as possible," he said.

Putrajaya, spanning 4,581 hectares about 40km south of Kuala Lumpur, is one of two planned "intelligent" cities under the Multimedia Super Corridor (MSC) project.

The project to set up the MSC, a 15-by-50 kilometre technology zone, in September 1996 and is expected to be completed by 2010.

The prime minister's office overlooks a beautiful mosque that can accommodate some 15,000 worshippers, topped by a magnificent dome and a 116 metre minaret.

Some 1,000 civil servants, mostly staff of the Prime Minister's Department, are expected to start work in the new administrative complex

this month.

The number is expected to increase to 2,800 by the end of the year and 16,000 by 2005. Other government ministries will gradually relocate to Putrajaya over the next five years.

When fully completed, Putrajaya is expected to have a population of 330,000. It will be called a "City in a Garden" with 38 per cent of the land earmarked as green areas.

-- BERNAMA

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