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Focus-Putrajaya

PUTRAJAYA: MORE THAN A NEW ADDRESS IN TOWN

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KUALA LUMPUR: In the heart of the Multimedia Super Corridor a futuristic city is taking shape to propel Malaysia into the new millennium and the age of Information Technology.

Sprawling over 4,851ha, Putrajaya, lying 40km south of here, is the country's new administrative capital to ease the pressure on the infrastructure and facilities in the capital city of Kuala Lumpur.

Putrajaya, carved out of oil palm plantations in a location known as Perang Besar, is developed as an intelligent city and when completed, it will be a City of the 21st Century, fully equipped with sophisticated electronic facilities.

"Putrajaya will be a city that characterises the spirit of Malaysia in its fullest sense in the 21st century when it is fully completed...Putrajaya will symbolise the nation's aspirations," Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad had said.

#### UNIQUENESS OF PUTRAJAYA

As far as planned cities are concerned, Putrajaya is unique because it is designed together with the MSC -- a 750 sq km zone dedicated to the development of multimedia products and services and -- Cyberjaya, the IT city.

Thus, it will not be a monofunctional city filled with bureaucrats and politicians. Rather, Putrajaya and Cyberjaya - still in its infancy of development -- will play a crucial role in Malaysia's quest to be the centre for IT in Asia.

Prof Azman Awang, executive director of Institut Sultan Iskandar, Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, says that the fact that Putrajaya is planned together with MSC and Cyberjaya, the cybercity with the latest IT infrastructure to meet the business, residential and recreational needs of the "knowledge worker", makes a lot of difference (from other planned cities).

"The synergy, if implemented successfully, will be tremendous in positioning Malaysia into the 21st century.

"Putrajaya cannot be compared with other planned cities like Canberra or Brasilia which were completely dead at night bereft of the 'livingness' of a good living city, and it took them a good number of years to get a semblance of their vibrance," he says.

Since it is planned with the rest of the MSC, KL International Airport, Cyberjaya and R and D clusters, among others, with an Express Rail Link connecting Kuala Lumpur and KLIA in Sepang, running right across the twin intelligent cities, Putrajaya will mature into a vibrant city quite quickly.

#### WEALTH CREATION AS LAND PRICES SOAR

Things will move quickly now that Dr Mahathir has moved into Putrajaya. Putrajaya will have a "positive impact" for land owners in the areas ringing Putrajaya and Cyberjaya, Azman says.

The real estate value in this zone will appreciate significantly, although this will depend on the absorptive capacity of the market, he says.

Real estate agents estimate the value of land there to be between RM15 to RM20 per sq foot compared with a meagre RM4 before the building of the

cities were announced.

Azman expects speculators will swarm in to snap up property in these areas and they will not be "first time" buyers.

Property value in Nilai, Salak Tinggi and Dengkil, among others have soared substantially.

New housing estates have mushroomed in areas hugging the twin intelligent cities and are fetching high prices.

Property analysts reckon the services industry will grow and there will be potential demand for commercial space and business hotels in the near future.

Putrajaya will be linked to other urban areas by the North-South Link, KL-Putrajaya-KLIA Dedicated Highway and the KL-Seremban Highway.

These links will boost growth in the areas surrounding the administrative centre.

Putrajaya Corporation President Tan Sri Azizan Zainul Abidin said with justified optimism: "By 2005 Putrajaya will be a viable city."

#### A GLIMPSE OF PUTRAJAYA

Work on Putrajaya, named after Malaysia's first prime minister, Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra al-Haj, began in 1996 and is scheduled for completion in 2010.

A glimpse into the dawn of the administrative centre revealed a landscape of rolling green hills, a massive man-made lake and ultra-modern buildings which include part of the Prime Minister's office complex, a magnificent mosque, and the Prime Minister's residence, among others.

Putrajaya, aptly named "City in a Garden," will be identified with numerous parks and wetlands as well as promenades, plazas and squares when completed.

Dr Mahathir, on moving into his new office, had told the press that Putrajaya was built for the next 100, 200 and 300 years.

Some 1,000 civil servants began work in the dream capital this month increasing to 2,800 by the end of the year and 16,000 by 2005.

"We're building this for our future generations. It's our heritage. It must be of the character that the next generation will be proud of," said Azizan.

When fully completed, the city will be able to sustain 350,000 people.

#### "PAPER LESS" BUREAUCRACY

Putrajaya can also lay claim to being the world's first "paper less," not "paperless", bureaucracy because wireless connectivity forms the backbone of its development and incorporated into all government buildings, businesses, commercial centres and civic and public activities.

Azman says that with the right approach, a paper less bureaucracy can enhance good governance, such as transparency, accountability, greater efficiency and effectiveness.

"The people which the city serves must be prepared to make the change. They must be re-skilled and re-tooled," he adds.

Dr Mahathir had also said that the creation of Putrajaya is to fulfil the objective of Vision 2020 -- the attainment of developed nation status.

"Putrajaya will be a catalyst of growth for the country but it has to be planned and synergised with the rest of the MSC and the whole Metropolitan Kuala Lumpur region which is bigger than the Klang Valley region," Azman says.

The fact that Putrajaya is very much part of the MSC, will have an overwhelming impact on the economy in the new millennium.

A study Azman quoted says: "No nation can operate a 21st Century economy without a 21st Century electronic infrastructure, embracing

computers, data communications and other new media."

Undoubtedly, Putrajaya will have far-reaching implications for the country and will be the hottest address in town. -- Bernama

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