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## Sarawak 'dreamland' takes shape

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IMAGINE yourself at the top of a mountain range. All day long, the atmosphere is cool and breezy, and the air, fresh.

In the vast undulating landscapes are properly maintained greenery and lots of colourful flowers.

If you think that such a place only exists in dreams, then you need a wake-up call because this "dreamland" is shaping up very nicely in Sarawak, or more precisely at the Penrissen Highlands, about 70km from Kuching.

Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad is scheduled to open this RM500 million masterpiece by businessman Tan Sri Lee Kim Yew on Saturday.

The project is known as Borneo Highlands Resort and Lee's Country Heights Holdings Bhd is developing it jointly with the Sarawak Land Custody and Development Authority.

Penrissen Highlands is a mountain range on the Sarawak-Kalimantan (Indonesia) border and its highest point is the 1,329-metre Gunung Penrissen.

The resort occupies 2,300 hectares of logged forest on this highland and its elevation ranges from 600 to 1,000 metres above sea level with daily temperatures fluctuating between 18 and 28 degrees Celsius.

Lee's idea is to turn this unutilised place into the region's top jungle wonderland.

He intends to use this international class outfit to tap into the growing international and domestic market for ecotourism.

Work on the resort started in April 1995.

Staggered over five phases, it is expected to be completed around 2005.

The road from the city to the resort is tar-sealed all the way. Journey to the foothills of the resort is 55km and a further 10km drive up the slope will take one to the clubhouse of the recently-opened 18-hole international golf course.

"We are not exactly ready to receive the public yet.

"As for the golf course, it is only open to members," said senior project manager Lau Kiu Huat.

Among the features which have been completed to date are the main infrastructure works, the golf course, club house, chalets and the spectacular Chrysanthemum Garden, a riot of yellow, white, orange and pink.

The Chrysanthemum Garden, in fact, forms part of a grand plan to set up themed gardens modelled after the Buchart Gardens in Victoria, British Columbia.

"We are also working on establishing an organic garden.

"Overall, the idea of this resort is to promote healthy living," said Lau.

The resort presently has in its possession 45 electric buggies, those often seen on golf courses.

Another 20 are on the way.

"Eventually, what we plan to have are electric buggies and electric cars.

"Visitors will leave their vehicles at the foothills and we will transport them to the resort using this electric vehicles.

"We want to be as environmental friendly as possible," said Lau.

He added that once the crowd picked up, the resort might see cable cars

as well.

On the overall master plan, Lau said the finished product would most likely comprise three hotels, about 500 luxurious bungalows, adventureland playground and a cultural centre.

There will also be jungle trails to remote longhouses in this Bidayuh heartland, such as Kakas, Assum, Parang, Kiding and Sepit.

"We are still open to ideas on what we should include in this resort, but what is definite is there won't be any casinos or hi-tech theme parks here," Lau said.

In terms of telecommunications, Lau said Telekom Malaysia had started work on laying a fibre optic line to the resort.

The project is expected to be completed before the end of the year.

"Once completed, the resort would be able to provide facilities which fibre optics can support, such as Internet access and video conferencing," he said.

During Dr Mahathir's visit, there will be a golf membership promotion and about 50 bungalow lots would be put up for sale also.

Towards the end of the year, a flower show may be held to promote the resort.

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