

'Incorporate, not devastate'

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Putrajaya a model of development in tandem with nature, says Dr Mahathir

By Ramlan Said and Sumitha Martin

PUTRAJAYA, Fri. — Developers should strive to build projects that give equal emphasis to the environment and which include provisions for parks and wetlands, Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Although such ventures would incur a higher cost, the Prime Minister said they should not be afraid to spend more as buyers would be attracted by such facilities.

Taking the development of Putrajaya and its wetland park as an example, Dr Mahathir said the creation of a pleasant environment for projects would enhance the quality of the areas.

"Putrajaya and the wetland can be used as a model on how development of new townships can be carried out in tandem with nature," he said when opening the Putrajaya Wetland in conjunction with the declaration of Putrajaya as a Federal Territory.

The artificial wetland functions as a flood control system and a natural filter system for the 600-hectare Putrajaya Lake.

Covering a total of 335ha, the park comprises Taman Wetland and the wetland areas, made of 24 wetland cells built along the Chuau and Bisa rivers.

Marshes and swamps were developed in the cells populated by more than 70 species of wetland plants.

Twenty-four species of indigenous fish were introduced into the cells and have adjusted to the environment, adding diversity to the man-made eco-system.

The Prime Minister said there was no

need for developers to fell trees and level hills for projects.

"They do this to maximise land usage but it makes the projects less attractive. But look at Putrajaya, I think buyers can be persuaded to pay a little bit more because of the efforts taken in preserving nature."

Dr Mahathir agreed that more areas had to be allocated if lakes and parks were to be provided, but argued that the facilities would make the projects more attractive.

"Therefore, I hope more lakes will be built. If there are already disused mining pools, do not fill them up but beautify and landscape the area."

"The lakes may turn up as an asset for the project."

On the Putrajaya wetland, Dr Mahathir said it was created not only for residents of the Federal Territory, but for local and foreign tourists as well.

He said a visit to the place could give one an insight into the preservation of nature and environment.

Dr Mahathir praised Perbadanan Putrajaya for its decision to build the wetland, saying the move was timely, with the protection of the environment gaining much attention nowadays.

"In fact, there were no lakes in Putrajaya when it was still a rubber and oil palm estate known as Prang Besar. It only has two small streams, but with the technology available today, a deep and large lake was created out of that."

If more man-made wetlands could be built, the Prime Minister said it would make the country more beautiful, adding it was not necessary to have one covering a large area.