

FOR THE FUTURE

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PUTRAJAYA: Putrajaya was yesterday declared a Federal Territory and, said Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, it will be the administrative seat for the leaders of the future.

The Prime Minister said the nation had developed so much that it needed a symbol which would be identified with the country.

"Of course, Kuala Lumpur was identified with the country but that was the pre-independence capital.

"We are not forgetting KL. It will be the commercial cen-

"We do not want to see a new house built or, worse still, a new town become the new capital every time a new leader comes to power.

"Putrajaya is for the leaders of the future in a country which has achieved much development and on the way of becoming a developed nation," he said.

He questioned why they (critics) had not complained when the Government, in the past, developed other townships such as Petaling Jaya, Subang Jaya, Bandar Baru Nilai, Shah Alam, Serdang and Puchong.

He said development of townships was profitable and contributed a great deal to the

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tre and Putrajaya will be the administrative centre.

"I hope they will never change the (administrative) capital again," he told reporters after the official declaration.

Putrajaya, sprawled over 4,581 hectares, is the country's third Federal Territory after Kuala Lumpur and Labuan.

Asked what Malaysia's next big project was, Dr Mahathir said: "We will focus on a not-so-romantic thing — it's called agriculture."

He said the country would try to improve food production and manufacturing to bring down the cost of importing food and to increase exports.

In his speech, Dr Mahathir took to task critics who claimed that Putrajaya was wasteful.

"Putrajaya is not built for the government leaders of today.

country's economic growth.

He said Putrajaya was also a development project and, eventually, would generate profits like any other housing project.

"So, I don't know why people should complain about it.

"If we were to hand this over to the private sector, there would be a scramble and everybody would want a piece of the land to develop."

Calling such criticisms as politically motivated, he said these people were even prepared to put aside the interest of the people for their own political gains.

"And because of this, they are willing to conspire with foreigners and cast aspersions on the project and accuse it of being a wasteful and mega project."

He said people might have

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doubts but "they must have seen that the silly things that we do turn out to be not so silly."

Dr Mahathir pointed to projects like the Penang Bridge and the Proton car where sceptics were proven wrong.

He said the Penang Bridge now was insufficient and another bridge would have to be built to handle the number of cars using it.

"Just imagine if we never built that bridge — what would the situation be like now. Penang would never develop and you can't handle the traffic.

"All these things are done not for today but for the future. Of course it looks big today but in the future it is going to look very small."

Dr Mahathir also said that Malaysia used its own money to develop Putrajaya.

He said Malaysia was very careful with its finances.