

'Development of new FT not wasteful'

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PUTRAJAYA, Thurs: Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said the Putrajaya project is part of property development which is profitable for all those involved.

He expressed disappointment that some parties have alleged that it is a waste of government money without realising that it actually did not take a big portion of the national budget.

Like all housing projects, the development of Putrajaya is going to generate profit, in this case for a 4,545ha housing estate, he told reporters after declaring Putrajaya a Federal Territory here today.

He said: "Property development generates lots of profits and funds. So, this is another property development. We developed Petaling Jaya, nobody complained and it's not a loss.

"Shah Alam, Bandar Baru Nilai, Bandar Muadzam Shah, Seberang Jaya - all these are development pro-

jects that are profitable. I don't know why people should complain.

"If we were to send over this project to the private sector, there would be a scramble. Everybody would want a piece of the land to develop. But here when the government does this, not even wasting government money, people say all kinds of things."

Asked whether it is wrong for Malaysians to question the government's move, he said: "I suppose they have doubts in their mind but they must have seen that the silly things that we do turned out to be not so silly."

Mahathir said the same applied to the national car project when people could not believe that a developing country could build its own car.

"But here we have our national car and the engineering capability developed," he said.

"We built this with our own money, we don't borrow money to build it and despite

this, we pay all our debts on time."

The country also does not have to borrow much as the government is careful about its finances.

He said it is not true that the government is wasting money for the development of Putrajaya and other projects as it controls the amount of money used.

"That's why we have increased reserves in this country; despite the crisis, it is bigger than most country and we still have money to continue with this project because we find ways of making money available."

Mahathir said government projects, including Putrajaya, are meant for the future.

"Of course, it looks big today but in future, it's going to look very small."

Disappointed with the attitude of a few Malaysians who are never satisfied with the government, he said the building of the Penang Bridge had also received

similar comments.

"When we built the Penang Bridge, I came in for very heavy shelling. Today, it is not sufficient, we have to build another bridge," he said.

"Just imagine if we have not built it, what does the situation look like now? Penang would never develop and we can't handle the traffic. All these things are done not for today but for the future."

Asked to give his personal opinion on today's historic event, he said Malaysians should be more confident about what the government is doing and not be taken in by what others say.

He noted that in the past, none of the foreign commentators had been right in their writings about this country.

Asked what is next after Putrajaya, he said he does not think in terms of big projects and that the country's focus today is actually agriculture and improving food production and manufacturing.