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Dr M not keen on renaming Pekan Rabu 'Che Det Mall'

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ALOR STAR, Thurs. - Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad today seemed less than thrilled at the prospect of Pekan Rabu being renamed Che Det Mall, in his honour.

The traditional Malay bazaar that has become a landmark here is closely associated with the Prime Minister who traded in it during the Japanese occupation.

The bazaar and its surrounding areas are being redeveloped at a cost of RM13 million and the co-operative that runs it wants to rename it Che Det Mall and the pedestrian walkway, Che Det Walk.

"Talking about this Che Det Walk, Che Det Mall lah... I do not know if my name (Che Det is Dr Mahathir's pet name) should be used.

"I have not given approval... they did not even ask me," he said in his speech to Koperasi Pekan Rabu Alor Star Bhd members at its 38th annual general meeting.

Also present were Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and co-operative chairman Azmi Shahab.

Dr Mahathir explained he was not in favour of buildings being named after him while he was still alive.

He said when he was the Education Minister, one of his first directives was to forbid any school from being named after him.

He said that was why until today, there was no Sekolah Menengah Dr Mahathir or Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali.

"So if you want to name a school, road or anything after me, please wait until I am dead," he said, eliciting laughter from the crowd.

He said "Che Det Mall" sounded like a tongue twister and feared the use of his pet name may not be well received.

Lowering his voice to a whisper and shielding his mouth with his hand as if to tell a secret, Dr Mahathir told the crowd:

"Barangkali orang Pas tak datang." (Maybe Pas people will not come.)

After opening the meeting, Dr Mahathir visited Pekan Rabu where work on a paved walkway was under way.

The bazaar, which houses shops owned by Malay traders, will be transformed into a retail and cultural centre by November.

The paved walkway and pedestrian mall will feature cafes, souvenir shops and a large electronic billboard for advertisements.

Another addition will be a square, to be constructed over Sungai Raja which flows along Pekan Rabu. It will be used for cultural performances and exhibitions.

The area will also see the addition of a four-storey budget hotel, conference rooms and a covered escalator to replace the pedestrian bridge that spans Jalan Tunku Ibrahim.

Earlier, Dr Mahathir visited a community computer centre at Kampung Padang Jambu Dalam in Simpang Empat Kangkong.

The Prime Minister spent about an hour watching students show off their computer skills at the centre which was set up by the Padang Jambu Dalam Umno branch.

The centre has 15 computers which are used by students aged between 10 and 17.