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Malaysia's pride

ONCE upon a time, it comprised mainly rubber and oil palm plantations. Today, the former Prang Besar, now familiarly known as Putrajaya, stands tall as an "intelligent city" with awe-inspiring architecture. It was only four years ago that the first phase of its construction began and its impressive development as Malaysia's new Federal administrative centre is only just the beginning.

The official declaration of Putrajaya as a Federal Territory on Feb 1 represents yet another milestone in the country's history. It is only appropriate that it be accorded city status by virtue of its being Malaysia's new command centre which will propel the country into the new millennium. It will eventually be a city committed to cutting-edge technology, safe residential areas and a clean environment, a city which is aesthetically pleasing yet practical.

As a natural course of progression, Putrajaya will enjoy all the perks and privileges that come with the coveted status. The villages fringing Putrajaya also stand to benefit as the Federal Government will also fund projects in these areas. Kuala Lumpur and Labuan are prime examples of the benefits that can be accrued from Federal Territory status.

Their comprehensive growth, spin-offs in job opportunities and generation of income channelled back to the people through public development projects all have an impact on socio-economic development - these being win-win situations for both the Government and the private sector.

For all the bouquets it gets, brickbats have been hurled as well at Putrajaya's development, the contention being the Government is indulging in wastage. As Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said at the declaration ceremony on Thursday, the country's financial situation would be problematic and critical if this were so.

The need for a new epicentre of Government administration is pretty obvious. Kuala Lumpur's development is now stretched, its growth having gone through leaps and bounds since it attained Federal Territory status 17 years ago.

Its congestion especially at the heart of the city is depressing, to say the least. While its transport system is being beefed up, Kuala Lumpur continues to be a thriving commercial area.

But a more compelling reason for shifting the administrative centre is the rationale that Putrajaya is in a strategic locality by virtue of its proximity to Kuala Lumpur and the Kuala Lumpur International Airport, our gateway to the world. This strategic pairing of administrative and commercial cities is not unlike that of other cities in the world such as Canberra-Sydney (Australia) and Brasilia-Rio de Janeiro (Brazil).

If we wish to achieve developed nation status, we have to think and work smart. These are characteristics which are embodied in the development of Putrajaya which showcases the fostering of a new lifestyle in a new environment, combining hard work and recreation.

Putrajaya's success is every Malaysian's pride. Even the Opposition has acknowledged that the new Federal Territory's development is good for the rakyat. That said, if we want to be a progressive nation, we have to think ahead for future generations and not take things for granted. Putrajaya is a futuristic city for future leaders, a city which all Malaysians can be justifiably proud of.

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