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## Masterpiece of a mosque

Golam al-Mahdi

THE number of mosques has grown rapidly in Malaysia and among the famous ones are Masjid Negara in Kuala Lumpur, Masjid Shah Alam in Selangor and Masjid Putra Jaya.

The development of Masjid Wilayah Persekutuan began from the idea of Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad.

Kuala Lumpur as Federal Territory is regarded as a main focal point by the Muslims in the region, and also by the international community. It needed a distinguished mosque, which could play its role in highlighting Islam.

In making this a reality, the Public Works Department (PWD), was assigned, under Prime Minister's Office, Datuk Abdul Hamid Othman, Tan Sri Datuk Ir. Haji Omar Ibrahim and his deputy, Datuk Haji Abdul Rahim Abdullah, to build a unique mosque.

To do this, the party travelled to a few famous mosques in the Middle-East, Turkey, Morocco and Spain, to study Islamic architecture.

A few locations were suggested for the mosque and finally the area in Jalan Duta, situated on a hilly land, not far from the city centre was chosen. It had 13.4 hectares which could easily accommodate a 47,000 square-metre mosque with comfortable facilities for the visitors.

The group of architects who designed the mosque looked at some of the most beautiful ones in the world to come up with a masterpiece. What is special about the mosque is that it is also a madrasah (educational centre), recreational area and study and social centres as well.

The design of the mosque is enhanced with 23 domes of varying sizes, from a diameter of 3 metres to 30 metres. The profile of the dome is derived from Byzantine models. The main dome is formed in two layers, and one can enter the space in between for maintenance.

Beautiful arabesques are found in the upper area of the three main entrances, the lower parts surrounding the main dome and the angles of the mehrab area in the main prayer room that astonish the visitors. The finishing is made of granite and marble carried from India. The main praying hall is 30 metres by 45 metres, standing without any pillars. It can accommodate more than 5,000 people.

The 1,520 square metres of the women prayer's hall on the fourth level accommodates 2,000. The same area under the main prayer hall is used as a multi-purpose hall.

The mosques at the complex are among the few in the world where women are not barred from joining in congregational prayers. Special facilities have been provided for them on an upper level. They have separate entrances as well as ablution facilities. Mothers can pick up or drop their children for whatever activity in the kindergarten and if it is time for prayer they can also join in the congregation prayer (Jama'a). This ensures that the entire family can perform their prayer at the same place at the proper time.

It is an ideal social venue for the visitors who have access to the library and computer centre.

Many rooms with excellent facilities have been provided for youth who come as guests to understand the beauty of Islam and make it a part of their lives.

There is a huge hall and conference centre, with separate entrances as well as seating arrangements for both males and females.

The mosque has two minarets and one of them is equipped with an elevator. The tall minaret can be seen from far away.

A special lighting system from Germany has been installed in the mosque. A beautiful chandelier, with 1,650 pieces of crystal, brings light into the main praying area of the mosque, which is also equipped with one of the most sophisticated sound systems in the world. The system uses 46 control points, 41 microphones and 18 speakers.

Surrounding the mosque are tranquil, landscaped gardens.

The mosque has been visited by the Yang diPertuan Agong and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Mahathir for Friday prayers and will be inaugurated officially by next Hari Raya.

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