

02/02/2001

PM: Putrajaya a project for the future

Eirmalasang Bani

PRIME Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad yesterday reiterated that Putrajaya, the country's new administrative centre, is a viable development project and benefits the country.

"This (Putrajaya) is another property development project. Nobody complained when we developed Petaling Jaya, Shah Alam, Bandar Baru Nilai, Bandar Muadzam Syah or Seberang Jaya. These are development projects and they are profitable, so I do not know why people should complain.

"If we were to hand over this thing to the private sector, there will be a scramble, everybody would want a piece of the land to develop but here when the Government builds it and it is not even wasting money, people say all sorts of thing," Dr Mahathir told reporters after officially declaring Putrajaya a Federal Territory at Dataran Perdana yesterday.

The Prime Minister said earlier he is disappointed that while foreigners and those who have visited Putrajaya appreciated it very much, "a few people seem never to be satisfied with anything".

He said the creation of Putrajaya as the Government's administrative centre and the development of townships surrounding the city are done for the future.

"While such developments may look big today, in the future they will look very small. If you remember when we built the Penang Bridge ... today the bridge is not sufficient we have to build another.

"Just imagine if we did not build that bridge, what is the situation right now? Penang would never be developed and you would not be able to handle the traffic.

"All these things are done not for today. They are done for the future. Of course, they look big today but in the future they will look very small," he said.

On whether more Malaysians will question the purpose of developing the area, Dr Mahathir said some may still have doubts.

"We need time. The moment you do something there is criticism. We have built this with our own money. We did not borrow money to build this thing. This is our own money and we pay all our debts on time ... and we do not have to borrow much.

"We are very careful with our finances. People may not believe this. People may think that we waste money and all that, but it is not so. We control the amount of money that we use. That is why we have increased reserves in this country, despite the economic slowdown," he said.

Dr Mahathir said such projects will continue and the Government will find ways of making money available.

"Like this one (Putrajaya), the money is not coming from the national budget ... not much. It is very little because eventually like all housing projects, this is going to generate profits," he said.

Dr Mahathir said Malaysia has enjoyed prosperity because property development generates a lot of profits and funds.

While Putrajaya will be the administrative centre, the Prime Minister said, Kuala Lumpur will remain the commercial centre and capital of Malaysia.

On his next big plan after Putrajaya, Dr Mahathir said he is not thinking in terms of big projects.

"Today, our concentration is on agriculture. We have to improve food production and food manufacturing in this country in order to reduce the

import cost," he said.

(END)