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Putrajaya's many splendours

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PUTRAJAYA, the country's new Federal administrative centre located within the Multimedia Super Corridor, has transformed itself from an oil palm plantation into a leading architectural centrepiece in the region.

Sprawled over 4,581 hectares, the city has been planned and developed as a "Garden City, Intelligent City", with 40 per cent of the area to be covered with lush green gardens, parks, lakes and wetlands.

Although it will be equipped with state-of-the-art facilities to live up to its name as an intelligent city, intrinsic value is not sacrificed in developing the area.

One of the more prominent landmarks in Putrajaya is the stone-clad Perdana Putra building, which overlooks the Putrajaya Lake.

Considered as the nucleus of the country's new administrative centre, the structure houses the Prime Minister's and his deputy's offices.

Also based at the building are the Chief Secretary to the Government, Science Adviser to the Prime Minister, Implementation and Co-ordination Unit and the Special Technology Unit.

Currently, only the Prime Minister's Department is operating from Putrajaya, but other Ministries are expected to shift into the intelligent city when other government complexes are ready by the end of the year.

The pink-domed Putra Mosque extends out to the western shore of the Putra Lake, giving it a floating ambience.

Constructed mainly from granite, the mosque consists of three main areas - the prayer hall, courtyard and function rooms.

The interior of the holy place is embellished with carvings on cengal wood.

A 116-m tall minaret beside the mosque - the tallest in the region - serves as a reminder to the country's policy-makers to abide by their religious obligations.

The minaret is broken into five sections, representing the five pillars of Islam, the country's official religion.

The mosque can accommodate 15,000 worshippers at any one time and also houses a VIP room, library, Al-Quran Manuscript Museum, auditorium, exhibition foyer and seminar room.

There are three main bridges in Putrajaya, with the 435-m, twin-deck Putra Bridge designed to also act as a tourist attraction.

Linking the government precinct to the mixed development precinct, the design of the structure mirrors the famous Khaju Bridge in Isfahan, Iran.

Besides being accessible to vehicles and pedestrians, the monorail will also be able to cross the bridge. The Seri Perdana Bridge, built across the Putrajaya Lake, is designed based on Islamic architecture.

Spanning 370m, there are eight rest areas for visitors to enjoy the sights surrounding the lake, including the Prime Minister's Department and the Putra Mosque.

The shortest of the three bridges is the Seri Bakti Bridge. At 270m, it connects the government complex precinct with that of the residential area in Precinct 16.

One of the more popular buildings in the administrative centre is the Seri Perdana Complex, the local version of the White House in the United States.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, the first Prime Minister to reside in the building, described it as "a people's palace" in January last year

after his inaugural Hari Raya open house there.

That was the first time tens of thousands of well-wishers flooded the house to get a first-hand look at the building.

It consists of three major blocks, with the Banquet and Protocol Blocks opened to the public, while the Residence Block is a restricted area.

Several travel companies have packages for visitors to tour Seri Perdana.

Another architectural highlight of Putrajaya is Dataran Putra, where the light rail transit will run underground while cultural shows and concerts could be held at the square.

Adorned with decorative lights and fountains, it will also host events like National Day celebrations in future.

The Putrajaya Promenade, a 200-m wide, 2.6-km long promenade provides a soothing feeling to visitors taking a stroll beside the Putrajaya Lake.

Linking Dataran Putra and Putra Mosque, the promenade is artistically-designed to retain its natural landscape.