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Mahathir-Putrajaya

PUTRAJAYA OFFICIALLY DECLARED FEDERAL TERRITORY

PUTRAJAYA, Feb 1 (Bernama) -- A yet another historic event gained its place in the country's annals when Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad officially declared Putrajaya a Federal Territory in a colourful and joyous ceremony at Dataran Perdana here.

"In furtherance of the said agreement, I, in the name of God the compassionate and the merciful, hereby declare today, Feb 1 2001 coinciding with the seventh of Zulkaedah of 1421 Hegira, the inception of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya which encompasses the areas shown in gazetted plan No P.P. 2-2000.

"I pray that the Federal Territory of Putrajaya will remain as the administrative centre of independent and sovereign Malaysia," Dr Mahathir said when inaugurating the ceremony.

Putrajaya is the country's third Federal Territory after Kuala Lumpur and Labuan.

Dr Mahathir said today's declaration of Putrajaya as the country's administrative centre significantly placed for posterity the contributions and services of first prime minister Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, the Father of Independence and the Father of Malaysia.

"The federal government is overly pleased for being able to create and build Putrajaya and subsequently secure the agreement of the Selangor state government to alienate it to the federal government to be turned into a federal territory," Dr Mahathir said.

Putrajaya's creation placed the federal government in a better position to improve further its services to the masses more efficiently, speedily and effectively, he said.

Development of townships in the country, such as Putrajaya, should be well-received as it contributed enormously to national economic growth, the prime minister said.

Oddly, when the government started building Putrajaya, it was accused of indulging in wastage, he said and asked why no such accusation was hurled when towns like Petaling Jaya, Subang Jaya and Shah Alam were planned and constructed.

"The answer is politics and the penchant to create issues to run down the government. National interests are swept aside for the political interests of specific groups. Merely for such interests, these groups have no qualms about colluding with outsiders in branding Putrajaya as a wasteful mega project," he said.

"No one, be it the government or the private sector, loses from development of townships. All will gain and benefit," he said.

Given that urban areas enjoyed robust business compared to villages and estates, more Malaysians tend to gain from job and trading opportunities created by development of townships, he said.

"These activities bring revenue to local authorities, the state governments and the federal government and this income is ploughed back to urban-dwellers in the form of various public projects," he said.

The prime minister said Putrajaya, the country's biggest commercial project, was not created for the present day government leaders but to avoid erecting new premises "each time a new leader is installed and worse still, each time a new town is turned into a capital".

"Putrajaya is for all future leaders, leaders of a nation that has attained high level of advancement and which will become a developed

country, God willing," he said.

Dr Mahathir said the country's finances were the least affected by the development of Putrajaya, the Kuala Lumpur International Airport and other major projects.

This was why Malaysia remained the only country able to revive its economy wrecked by rogue speculators without having to borrow from the International Monetary Fund and let foreign agencies manage its economy, he said.

"We used our own funds to revive the economy and at the same did not default on debt repayment while carrying on with national development. We were able to pay salaries, bonuses, eradicate poverty and continue providing a host of infrastructures," he said.

Had the government bowed to the detractors, there would obviously be no Penang Bridge, North-South Expressway, national car, Putrajaya and several other projects, he said.

"Remember that outsiders who are critical of us are actually frustrated they did not get the projects. Malaysians who welcomed these foreign critics are actually allowing themselves to be the tools of foreigners," he said.

By creating Putrajaya, the federal government could directly develop the surrounding areas through erecting various infrastructures, commercial centres and social amenities, he said.

The venture would also facilitate speedier and efficient communication with state governments because of Putrajaya's strategic location and proximity to the KLIA, Cyberjaya and Kuala Lumpur, he said.

Four years ago, Putrajaya, covering 4,581 ha, was an oil palm-cum-rubber plantation in an economically less-significant area known as Perang Besar which only had 60 homes for estate workers, he said.

However, over a short time, after Putrajaya came up there are already 26 blocks of administrative buildings with 42 blocks more due for completion by 2003. By 2010, altogether 67,000 residential units would have been completed.

Currently Putrajaya has a population of 7,250 from 1,450 households and 1,500 units of dwellings.

Dr Mahathir said the federal government also thanked the Sultan of Selangor Sultan Salahuddin Abdul Aziz Shah, the Regent of Selangor and the state government for agreeing to alienate Putrajaya as a Federal Territory.

"I'm mindful that despite the small size of the area, any surrender of state land to the federal government is a sacrifice. It is out of the commitment of states under the concept of federalism that Selangor willingly made the sacrifice.

"The nation is thankful to Selangor for this," said Dr Mahathir.

The state government signed the agreement for alienating Putrajaya to the federal government on Nov 7 last year.

Dr Mahathir added that the creation of the Federal Territory of Putrajaya augured well for realising Vision 2020 to make Malaysia a developed nation by year 2020, signifying that Malaysia was on track towards that end.

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