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A modern wonder

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TAKE A drive any weekend on the series of new expressways south of Kuala Lumpur heading towards Putrajaya and you will experience massive development on the site of the new Malaysian federal administrative capital.

The scale of construction is enormous and there are very few signs of the oil palm plantations that once covered the landscape. Offices, houses, schools and shops are springing up all over Putrajaya in anticipation of the thousands of people who will move there to help drive the new Malaysian federal administrative capital to even greater heights.

Putrajaya is strategically located along the Kuala Lumpur-KL International Airport (KLIA) growth corridor. In total, it covers an area in excess of 4,500 hectares. It is easily accessible via a series of planned expressways, dedicated highways and the new express rail link from KL Sentral to KLIA.

Putrajaya was named after the nation's first Prime Minister, the late Tunku Abdul Rahman Putra Al-Haj, in recognition of the significant role he played in the nation's independence. There are three phases to its development. The first two phases have already been completed while the last one is scheduled for completion in 2010.

There are several precincts in the planned development. These are the essential core areas devoted to Government structures, a mixed development area, a commercial precinct, cultural and civic developments and a sports and recreational precinct.

An essential component of these developments, however, is the concept of a city in the garden with sufficient parkland, recreational space and open land. Approximately 70 per cent of the total development at Putrajaya is devoted to water and green areas to provide the 'lungs' for the capital.

One of the dominant features of Putrajaya is the Prime Minister's office complex. This massive building, topped with a blue dome, dominates the landscape. The complex is situated on the highest hill and overlooks the Putrajaya Lake. The natural stone-clad building with its green pitched roof and onion-shaped dome is a distinctive landmark of the new federal administrative capital.

The other main feature in Putrajaya is the pink-domed Putra Mosque. Extending out of the western shore of the Putrajaya Lake, from a distance, the mosque seems to float on water.

This startling pink building, inlaid with pink-coloured granite, incorporates the Islamic architecture from countries such as Morocco, Turkestan and Kazakhstan and consists of a 115-metre tall minaret. The main mosque building can accommodate 15,000 people at one time. One of the most striking features of the minaret is the design which was based on the Sheikh Oman Mosque in Baghdad. The Putra Mosque is home to an impressive minaret built in five tiers - representing the Five Pillars of Islam.

There are many opportunities to walk around the central precinct of Putrajaya. The centrepiece of Dataran Putra is a great place to start. The ceremonial 300-metre circular Dataran Putra is adorned with light and water features and bounded by the Promenade, Perdana Putra, Perdana Walk, Putra Mosque and the Putra Bridge.

Selera Putra, located at the lower level of Dataran Putra and fronting Putrajaya Lake, is a food court offering local food and quick service restaurants.

Visitors are allowed to park their cars on the square. During the weekend, the place is packed with tourists armed with cameras and astonished looks.

One of the main landscaping features is the 600-hectare constructed lake known as the Putrajaya Wetlands. These water plants and associated vegetation act as a natural filter to improve the water quality of the lake system throughout Putrajaya. These wetlands also help to reduce the potentially damaging effects of flooding by retaining much of the water that would otherwise flow downstream during heavy rainstorms.

Wetland plants also serve as a filter to trap sediments while absorbing nutrients and removing toxic substances. Wetlands are also a home to many native plants and animals. Wading birds like egrets feed along the shallow water's edge while others swim on the open waters. Malaysia's wetlands serve as a resting place for migratory birds, which fly from as far away as Australia and Siberia.

The Putrajaya Wetlands is a focal point for environmental education, recreation and academic research. No longer are wetlands seen as wastelands but rather as an essential component of the environment.

Over ten million native wetland plants have been established in the wetlands. These comprise plants from over 50 native plant species.

Currently, there is no visitor's accommodation in Putrajaya although this will change in the near future. However, for those who want to give Putrajaya an extended inspection or simply have a peaceful retreat, the five-star Cyberview Lodge Resort in adjoining Cyberjaya is highly recommended.

While the resort covers a large area of land, it still has the warmth of a boutique hotel. It's almost like a family operated hotel where you feel like a long-lost relative being welcomed back home.

The resort was selected for the Apec Leaders' Retreat a few years back, so this gives an indication of the standards that apply here. There is a garden near the lobby dedicated to this event and photos of the likes of Al Gore, John Howard and Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad clad in batik are featured in the lobby.

Several things immediately stand out in this property. While many hotels talk about Internet access and high-speed connections, etc, Cyberview Lodge Resort has installed a PC with free 24-hour Internet access in each room. Visit the Cyberview Lodge Resort website at: [www.cyberview-lodge.com](http://www.cyberview-lodge.com) or contact them on: [hotline@cyberview-lodge.com.my](mailto:hotline@cyberview-lodge.com.my), tel: 03-8312 7000, fax: 03-8312 7001.