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Marking Putrajaya's second anniversary

PUTRAJAYA, Tues. - The nation's third and latest Federal Territory, Putrajaya, celebrated its second anniversary today - living proof that a well-balanced development that gives prominence to nature can co-exist harmoniously with modernity.

The celebrations were held in the Taman Botani park, coinciding with the park's official launch and to signify the concept that Putrajaya is built as a city within a garden.

The celebrations and launch were officiated by Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad amid the lush and verdant surroundings of the park.

In his speech, the Prime Minister spoke of Putrajaya's origins, which started from an oil palm plantation. "It is now a self-contained development with complete amenities and facilities, yet still retaining its green character."

Taman Botani is one of 13 parks in Putrajaya, situated on the northern section of Precinct 1 and next to the tranquil Putrajaya Lake, and is spread over 92 hectares. At present, only 25.2 hectares have been utilised.

The largest park of its kind in the country, it was designed as an arcadia or a national sanctuary for Malaysian plant taxonomy and as a centre for education and research. It houses some 700 species of local plants as well as those from the African and Asia-Pacific regions.

Dr Mahathir said the park was intended to create awareness among the young of the wealth of botanical resources in the country. He said the park, which contained more trees and plants than commonly seen in other tropical botanical parks, would become a landmark for those interested in botany.

To mark the launch, Dr Mahathir shook a cangklung, a traditional musical instrument before an ensemble of students performed, and those present were treated to a multimedia presentation of Putrajaya and the park.

Dr Mahathir later planted a palm sapling. The palm has been adopted as the official logo of the park, signifying the garden's role in the conservation of endangered species.

The Prime Minister was then presented with the first Rakan Botani membership card. He later toured the park, accompanied by wife Datuk Seri Dr Siti Hasmah Mohd Ali and Putrajaya Corporation president Tan Sri Azizah Zainul Abidin.

At the end of his tour, Dr Mahathir stopped at the Visitor Interpretive Centre to sign the opening plaque. There he was greeted with a performance by schoolchildren dressed in costumes representing flora and fauna.

Putrajaya, which is spread over some 4,500 hectares of land, began when the Cabinet approved the relocation of the Federal Government's administrative centre to Prang Besar in the District of Sepang, Selangor in 1993. Its name was changed in 1994 to Putrajaya in honour of the country's first Prime Minister, Tengku Abdul Rahman.