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Wonder of a summit venue

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DELEGATES of the 10th Organisation of Islamic Conference, to be held at the newly-completed Putrajaya Convention Centre in October, will have the country's largest and most technologically sophisticated convention centre as their summit venue.

The brainchild of Prime Minister Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, this architectural wonder is located atop a hill at the southernmost point of the government's administrative capital.

Able to seat up to 10,000 people and boasting more than five halls, the futuristic nine-storey building was designed by award-winning Malaysian architectural firm, Hijjas Kasturi Associates Sdn Bhd.

Hijjas, inspired by the unusual contours of the hill, created a masterpiece based on the rounded diamond-shaped pending perak (silver royal belt buckle).

The overall design is almost spherical, with an oval "eye" occupying the centre.

Apart from the five halls, there are three principal ones - the Plenary Hall on the first floor, the Head of States Hall on the ground floor and the Banquet Hall on the lower ground level. Lounges, galleries, prayer rooms, viewing decks, cafes and restaurants are also found at the centre.

The roof resembles a piece of folded origami while most of the walls are made of glass, thus allowing for natural sunlight in the interior.

From the viewing deck, one gets a superb panorama of waterways and undulating greens, bridges, mosque and the Putrajaya administrative complexes.

"It took us two years to complete the Putrajaya Convention Centre (PCC) at a cost of RM650 million. Most of the materials used are sourced locally. The chairs, for instance, though Spanish in design, are made from local wood.

"The PCC is also built with strict security features where, in case of an emergency, everyone within can be evacuated in 10 minutes," said Putrajaya Holdings Sdn Bhd chief executive officer Datuk Mohd Othman Zainal Azim.

Opened by Dr Mahathir yesterday, the PCC occupies a 20.4-hectare site and boasts a total floor area of 135,000 square metres. It also has two levels of parking areas with a total of 1,200 bays.

When commenting on transportation in Putrajaya, Othman said visitors could reach the administrative city either by road or rail.

The Express Rail Link stops at Putrajaya en route to Kuala Lumpur Sentral from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport. By road, it is accessible via the North-South Central Link, the KL-Seremban Highway, the Damansara-Puchong Expressway and the South Klang Valley Expressway.

"However, we hope to have a more mature transport system in future," said Othman.