

After Perkasa's 'Medina' claim, Dr M says Putrajaya inspired by Paris
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KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 8 — Breaking his silence on the furore over a Hard Rock Cafe in Putrajaya, Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad today denied Perkasa Youth's claim that he had based the administrative capital on Saudi Arabia's Medina and said it was inspired by Paris in France.

Saying that since Putrajaya was meant to be the centre of the country's administration, some of the design cues that eventually shaped it were culled from the iconic *Avenue des Champs-Élysées* in the French capital.

"I am grateful for the interpretations that are often made regarding my thoughts, but sometimes these interpretations differ from what I am really thinking about," the former prime minister wrote on his blog today.

In his latest entry, Dr Mahathir described how the famed boulevard's expansive main carriageway was flanked by entertainment outlets such as the equally iconic Lido cabaret as well as eateries that cater to the millions of tourists that throng the metropolis each year.

"We did not intend to replicate the Champs-Elysees in its entirety; we also did not for Putrajaya to just be an administrative capital filled only with government offices.

"Some entertainment does not conflict with the idea of Putrajaya. I disagree that there be liquor stores or strip clubs in Putrajaya, but there is nothing wrong with some entertainment," Dr Mahathir, who commissioned Putrajaya and the neighbouring Cyberjaya during his tenure, said today.

On Sunday, Perkasa Youth had railed against a reported bid to introduce the rock-and-roll themed franchise in Putrajaya, claiming it defiled the morality of the city that it insisted was designed by Dr Mahathir based on the structure of Medina, the second holiest city in Islam after Mecca,

It held up the mosque that was built near the centre of Putrajaya as evidence of Dr Mahathir's intentions.

The protests by Perkasa Youth also led to an apparent reversal by Putrajaya Corporation, which was forced to deny that a Hard Rock Cafe was confirmed for the administrative centre.

Its president, Tan Sri Aseh Che Mat, said the plan is still in the early stages and no decision has been made on the possibility of the restaurant and bar opening at Menara Ikhlas in Precinct 3, Putrajaya.

Federal Territories Minister Datuk Seri Tengku Adnan Mansor yesterday also said that a hypothetical Hard Rock Cafe in Putrajaya would be alcohol-free and play “nasyid” Islamic vocal music in place of the usual rock fare.

Never having been to one, Dr Mahathir said he was uncertain if a Hard Rock Cafe would be a right fit for Putrajaya, but reiterated that entertainment was fine as long as it was not obscene.

“We need entertainment. There are no restrictions on entertainment for weddings held in Putrajaya. Why not entertainment centres in restaurants?”

He also expressed support for Aseh’s efforts to develop Putrajaya, saying that he has personally witnessed the increase in visitors to the centre in the evenings due to the latter’s endeavours.

The current four Hard Rock Cafes in Malaysia are located in Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Malacca and Kota Kinabalu.

More than 70,000 guitars, bikes, cars, pianos, drums and various rock memorabilia decorate the walls of over 163 Hard Rock Cafes, Hotels and Casinos around the world, after the first guitar was put up by British rock musician Eric Clapton at the Hard Rock Cafe in London, which was an American diner, according to HRC’s Kuala Lumpur website.

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