

## **Now Perkasa Youth denies saying Medina-based Putrajaya was Dr M's idea**

**The Malaymail Online**

**January 09, 2014**

**BY SHAZWAN MUSTAFA KAMAL**

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 9 – Perkasa Youth has denied saying Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad had modelled Putrajaya after Muslim holy city Medina, after the former prime minister pointed out that the administrative capital was designed after Paris, France.

The right-wing Malay group's youth chief, Irwan Fahmi Ideris, told *The Malay Mail Online* that his previous statements were "unclear" and possibly misinterpreted.

"I did not actually mean to say that Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamed has based Putrajaya's design on Medina; it was Perkasa Youth's own interpretation. You see when Putrajaya was first built, the first thing which was constructed was a mosque and a courthouse, similar to Medina," he said in a telephone interview yesterday.

"So for me and Perkasa Youth, there is a symbolic meaning here, that is why we feel the design is like Medina. But if Tun (Dr Mahathir) says it is based Paris, then it is based on Paris... he knows best," he added.

On Sunday, Perkasa Youth had railed against a reported bid to introduce a Hard Rock Cafe in Putrajaya, claiming it defiled the morality of the city that it insisted was designed by the former prime minister based on the structure of Medina, the second holiest city in Islam after Mecca,

But Dr Mahathir broke his silence over the furore to dispute Perkasa Youth's claim that he had based the administrative capital on Saudi Arabia's Medina, saying instead that it was inspired by Paris in France.

"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 yesterday.

"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.

When asked to comment on Dr Mahathir's view that "some entertainment" would not violate the notion of Putrajaya, Irwan said he understood the former PM's vision to include some form of entertainment to attract more visitors to Putrajaya, but reiterated its stand against a Hard Rock Cafe there as it was "logistically too close to the administrative buildings."

"We know that hotels like JW Marriott (located in Putrajaya) also sell alcohol, we cannot do anything about that as we are just an NGO. But at least these hotels are not so near the actual administrative buildings.

“They want to build Hard Rock Cafe right on Precinct 3, it is not right. There are so many Malays around the area,” the Perkasa leader added.

He also said that hotels in the administrative capital were mostly frequented by “foreigners and not locals”, but did not provide any figures to substantiate his latest claim.

“If they still want to build Hard Rock, build a Hard Rock hotel without alcohol, no need for the cafe. Better yet, why not open a fish shop or paint ball shooting? That would be more appropriate,” Irwan said.

The protests by Perkasa Youth previously 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.

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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