

A Mosque for Tomorrow
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In medieval Europe, the soaring Gothic cathedral was a symbol of man's desire to build for the greater glory of God, with the best that art and nature could provide. The impulse has not died. Recently more than 10,000 people gathered in Kuala Lumpur to worship and admire at the formal opening of Malaysia's new \$3,300,000 Masjid Negara, or National Mosque. Five years in the making, the mosque (see color pages) was designed as a monument to the independence of the predominantly Moslem (58%) country.

As artful blend of Islamic tradition and modern design, the Masjid Negara suggests more the tomorrowland excitement of a world's fair than the fairyland world of the Arabian Nights. The central prayer hall has both indirect lighting and wall-to-wall carpeting. Around its walls are quotations from the Koran in fluid Arabic script; but much of the traditional latticework is wrought not in stone or stucco but in anodized aluminum. And when the muezzin rises to his lofty perch on the minaret to summon the faithful to prayer five times a day, he journeys by elevator, and his voice is carried across the 13-acre compound by a built-in loudspeaker system.

The mosque is considerably more than a house of prayer. The compound includes a library and dormitories for 30 pilgrims, as well as a conference hall equipped with facilities for the latest in radio and television broadcasting equipment. And in keeping with its dedication to Malaysian independence, the compound also contains a circular, rib-roofed mausoleum that will house the tombs of seven national heroes.

The man behind the mosque is Baharuddin bin Abu Kassim, 35, a government staff architect who studied at the University of Manchester in Britain, admits to a fondness for the work of Edward Durrell Stone, Le Corbusier and Minoru Yamasaki. Although he conceived the basic design ten years ago, Baharuddin—whose interior-decorator wife helped with the color scheme—spent months inspecting other mosques throughout the Islamic world before sitting down to his drawing board. To please Moslem traditionalists, he worked evocations of many classic structures into his design. Topping the verandas around the courtyard, for example, are 73 small, blue mosaic domes—similar in design to those on the portico of the Great Mosque in Mecca. But Baharuddin ultimately emphasized the new more than the old, "to symbolize a religion that is alive and growing and not buried in the past."

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