

Nation keen to promote tourism

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By **BALAN MOSES**

KUALA LUMPUR, Wed. — The Government hopes the tourist industry will generate sufficient revenue to carry the nation through its current economic difficulties.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the tourist industry was capable of strengthening the economy in the face of falling primary commodity prices.

"The Government is

very keen to promote tourism. The country is going through a very bad patch at the moment. We are hoping that the investment in hotels will promote (other) industries in the country," the Prime Minister said at the opening of the Pan Pacific Hotel.

The 30-storey hotel is owned by Seri Pacific Corporation — a joint venture between Japanese interests

and five local investors — and managed by Tokyu Hotels International (THI).

"It is very important for us, especially during these bad times, to look towards tourism."

Hotels, in particular, should try to improve their facilities and services so tourists and travellers would not be disappointed.

"We want to see more foreigners and tourists use our hotels. To this end, the hotels not only need to be beautiful but should also offer good cus-

tomers services," he said, adding that the local hotel industry needed to promote itself more effectively.

While the Government was trying to promote the country through the Tourist Development Corporation (TDC) and tourism conferences like the forthcoming Pacific Area Tourist Association (Pata) conference, the hotel industry should also play its part.

"We have made elaborate preparations

for the Pata conference. The whole country is being spruced up. But I hope that these activities would continue so as to make Malaysia a more attractive place to visit."

Dr Mahathir singled out Japan, Germany and other European countries as countries which should be wooed.

This is because their respective currencies had appreciated against the Malaysian ringgit. In this respect, Japanese tourists should be encouraged to visit Malaysia as the yen was very strong against the ringgit.

The Prime Minister added that Malaysia could further benefit from Japanese tourists as it was the recipient of several loans from Japan.

In a lighter vein, he said: "Thus, if the Japanese come here and spend their money they will not be losing anything as we will be sending it back to them in loan repayments."

In an obvious reference to Japan and Korea, he said that foreign countries would not lose if their tourists came here "as we have to buy a lot from abroad and pay for the construction of civil works in Malaysia."