

D341

U E651 AAE  
MAHATHIR-TOURISM

KUALA LUMPUR, APRIL 14, <sup>86</sup>(BERNAMA) -- THE GOVERNMENT IS BACKING THE TOURIST TRADE STRONGLY AND IS WILLING TO LISTEN TO THE IDEAS AND APPEALS OF THOSE IN THE TRADE; DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR MOHAMAD SAID TODAY.

TOURISM, ACCORDING TO THE PRIME MINISTER, HAD CREATED A POWERFUL NICHE FOR ITSELF, PARTICULARLY IN ASIA.

+IT NOW GENERATES BUSINESS TO THE TUNE OF US\$100 BILLION (ABOUT M\$261 BILLION) YEARLY AND IS GROWING BY LEAPS AND BOUNDS,+ HE SAID, ADDING THAT IN 1984 ALONE, 300 MILLION PEOPLE TRAVELLED WORLDWIDE.

OPENING THE 35TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE OF THE PACIFIC AREA TRAVEL ASSOCIATION (PATA) AT THE PUTRA WORLD TRADE CENTRE (PWTC) HERE, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THESE WERE FACTS THAT WERE HARDLY KNOWN OUTSIDE THE INDUSTRY.

HE ALSO SAID THERE WERE MANY PEOPLE WHO WISHED ONLY TO SEE THE NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF TOURISM. -- MORE

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+THEY SAY TOURISM WILL LEAD TO THE PROGRESSIVE EROSION OF CULTURES AND VALUES AND THE WAY OF LIFE.

+HOW WONDERFUL, SAY THESE PEOPLE, TO LEAVE THE NATIVES IN THEIR NATURAL HABITAT, UNSPOILT BY CAMERA-TOTING TOURISTS AND THEIR MONEY,+ THE PRIME MINISTER ADDED.

HE AGREED THAT NOTHING WAS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN TO SEE A FULL MOON SHINING ON AN ATTAP HUT WITH SWAYING COCONUT TREES BUT ADDED THAT +FOR THE MAN WHO AT THAT VERY MOMENT IS SWEATING AND SWATting MOSQUITOES AND TRYING TO SLEEP, THE BEAUTY OF THE SCENE IS LOST.+

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR FELT THAT THE MAN WOULD RATHER HAVE INSTEAD A BRICK AND MORTAR TERRACE HOUSE, ELECTRICITY AND PIPED WATER AS WELL AS OTHER MODERN CONVENIENCES.

+AND THESE HE WILL HAVE A CHANCE TO HAVE IF HE CAN EARN SOMETHING FROM TOURISM OR AT LEAST WHEN THE COUNTRY IS ENRICHED BY TOURISM,+ HE SAID. -- MORE

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THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THESE PEOPLE SHOULD NOT WORRY TOO MUCH ABOUT THE LOSS OF CULTURES AND VALUES.

+THE CULTURES CAN BE PRESERVED, SO CAN THE HUT AND THE MOONLIGHT AND THE SWAYING PALMS IF THE TOURISTS WANT TO SEE THESE.

+BUT A WHOLE NATION CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO EXPOSE THEMSELVES TO MOSQUITO BITES AND BE DEPRIVED OF A DECENT LIFE MERELY BECAUSE SOMEONE IS CONCERNED THAT WE SHOULD NOT SPOIL THEIR WAY OF LIFE,+ HE SAID.

MALAYSIA, DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID, KNEW FULLY WELL THAT ONCE IT LOST ITS SPECIAL CHARACTER, THE TOURISTS WOULD CEASE TO COME. +WE ALSO KNOW WE CAN RETAIN OUR CHARACTER WITHOUT THE NEED TO SUFFER MOSQUITO BITES AND RICKETY HUTS.+

HE ADMITTED THAT TOURISM WAS NOT 100 PERCENT GOOD AS BAD VALUES AND WAY OF LIFE DID SPREAD AS MORE PEOPLE WERE ABLE TO TRAVEL BUT THIS WAS THE PRICE ONE HAD TO PAY AS NOTHING IN THIS WORLD WAS FREE. -- MORE

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HE FELT THAT WHAT WAS IMPORTANT WAS THAT A COUNTRY MUST KNOW HOW TO MINIMISE THE DELETERIOUS EFFECTS OF TOURISM AND SAID NO COUNTRY SHOULD BE PROTECTED FROM TOURISTS BY WELL-INTENTIONED GROUPS UNLESS SOME ALTERNATIVE THAT COULD CONTRIBUTE TOWARDS DEVELOPMENT COULD BE GIVEN.

DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR ALSO TOUCHED ON THE HUMAN ELEMENT ASPECT OF THE INDUSTRY WHICH HE SAID WAS STILL IRREPLACABLE DESPITE THE ADVENT OF HIGH TECHNOLOGY.

+WHEN WE TRAVEL, IT IS NOT THE HOTEL COMPUTER SYSTEM THAT WE REMEMBER. IT IS THE PEOPLE THAT WE MEET, THEIR KINDNESS AND THE HOSPITALITY SHOWN US, THEIR GUESTS, THAT LEAVE A LASTING IMPRESSION,+ HE ADDED.

IN THIS RESPECT, IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR THIS HUMAN ELEMENT TO BE NURTURED AND TRAINED IN THE ART OF PEOPLE INTERACTION AS THERE WAS EVERYTHING TO BE GAINED FROM THE HOSPITALITY EXTENDED TO GUESTS.

TOURISM HAD ITS ROLE IN THESE TIMES OF RECESSION, HE SAID, STRESSING HOWEVER THAT IT WAS NOT THE OVERNIGHT ANSWER TO ANY COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC WOES.

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DATUK SERI DR MAHATHIR SAID THAT LIKE ANY OTHER INDUSTRY, TOURISM REQUIRED PLANNING AND INVESTMENT, AND SUPPORTIVE GOVERNMENT POLICIES.

MERE ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE TOURIST INDUSTRY FROM THE GOVERNMENT WAS NOT ENOUGH, HE SAID, ADDING THAT NO ONE WOULD VISIT A COUNTRY THAT WAS UNSTABLE AND UNSAFE, WHERE NOTHING WORKED, WHERE BUREAUCRATIC RED-TAPE ENTANGLED TRAVELLERS OR WHERE OFFICIALS UNNECESSARILY INTRUDED INTO ACTIVITIES OF NO CONCERN TO THEM.

+GOVERNMENTS MUST THEREFORE ASSURE POLITICAL STABILITY AND A MINIMUM OF REGULATIONS FOR VISITORS,+ HE SAID.

THE PRIME MINISTER SAID THE QUESTION OF MARKETING WAS IMPORTANT TOO FOR +NO MATTER HOW BEAUTIFUL A COUNTRY IS, WITHOUT GOOD MARKETING NOBODY WILL COME.+

MARKETING INVOLVED THE GOVERNMENT, THE TOURIST INDUSTRY PEOPLE AND ESPECIALLY THE MEDIA FOR AN INSENSITIVE MEDIA WOULD NEGATE ALL EFFORTS BY THE FIRST TWO, HE ADDED. -- MORE

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TRADE AND INDUSTRY MINISTER AND PATA '86 CHAIRMAN TENGKU RAZALEIGH HAMZAH, IN HIS SPEECH, REFERRED TO THE THEME OF THE CONFERENCE +GEARING FOR PROFITS+ AND SAID THAT FOR THE PAST FEW YEARS, MALAYSIA HAD BEEN DOING ITS LEVEL BEST TO STAY CLOSE TO THE THEME.

+THIS IS BECAUSE WE BELIEVE TOURISM CAN HELP SUSTAIN OUR NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH AND REDUCE THE INVISIBLES DEFICIT IN OUR BALANCE OF PAYMENT,+ HE SAID.

TENGKU RAZALEIGH SAID MALAYSIA WAS SUFFICIENTLY PREPARED TO CONTRIBUTE SUBSTANTIALLY TO THE RAPID GROWTH OF TOURISM IN THE ASIA-PACIFIC REGION, PARTICULARLY IN THE ASEAN REGION. -- BERNAMA  
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