

DR M: WE'RE STILL BEHIND IN TOURISM

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KUCHING, Thurs. — Malaysia still lags behind in tourism compared with several Asean countries in spite of the encouraging growth of the industry in the country, Datuk Seri Dr. Mahathir Mohamad said today.

Malaysia only obtained 13 per cent of foreign exchange from tourism, compared with Singapore's 35 per cent and Thailand's 28 per cent, the Prime Minister said when opening the \$10 million *Kampung Budaya Sarawak* (a cultural village) in Santubong, 35km from here.

The village, a new tourist attraction, is a project of the Sarawak Economic Development Corporation.

However, the Prime Minister said as a new

service industry, tourism had provided substantial foreign exchange, increasing 10-fold from \$266 million in 1972 to \$2.6 billion last year.

Tourists arrivals to Malaysia had also increased three-fold during the past 17 years from 1.2 million in 1972 to about 3.9 million last year.

The industry's contribution to the Gross National Product (GNP) is only about one per cent before 1980.

Dr Mahathir said the Government noticed that investments now were mainly confined to projects such as hotels, motels, chalets and so forth.

The Government hoped that investors would also scout for non-accommodation projects such as recreational facilities, he

said.

"We must provide more services and attractions that can meet the need of tourists who are getting sophisticated by the day," he said.

He said the Government hoped more such projects could be carried out throughout the country.

Dr Mahathir said the Government would continue to provide training connected with tourism such as that provided at the Institut Teknologi Mara and National Productivity Centre.

On the Visit Malaysia Year, he said people were involved directly or indirectly and as such they should be friendly and courteous and willing to help tourists.

He urged Malaysians to

join the authorities in keeping their towns, beaches and tourist centres clean.

The Prime Minister said the effort to encourage tourists to visit the country this year only marked the start of such intensive effort.

Results of the campaign would be seen years after the Visit Malaysia Year had ended and the benefits could be felt beginning this year, he said.

Earlier, Sarawak Chief Minister Tan Sri Haji Abdul Taib Mahmud said the State Government was determined to bring development and progress to 27 communities, including the Penan.

He said it would also ensure that their respective cultures were preserved.

The *Kampung Budaya*

Sarawak has seven types of houses of communities in the state such as the Malay, Chinese, Iban, Bidayuh, Melanau, Orang Ulu and Penan.

The unique feature of the village is that the communities themselves lived in these houses, carrying out their traditional and recreational activities such as farming and making handicraft.

Among those present were several Asean and EC Foreign Ministers who are in the state for the 8th Asean-EC Ministerial Conference to be opened by the Prime Minister tomorrow.

Dr Mahathir and other VIPs later spent about three hours touring the village. — Bernama.

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