

# Dr M: Work harder to maintain success

By James Ritchie

KUCHING, Thurs. — Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said today that the tourist industry had become an important revenue-earner for the country despite a late start. The Prime Minister said the industry raked in about \$2.6 billion last year.

Speaking at the official

opening of the Sarawak cultural village at Damai, 35km from here, he attributed the success to greater emphasis on promoting the industry.

“Besides establishing a Ministry to look into culture and tourism and enhancing the role of the Tourist Development Corporation in the promotion

and marketing of Malaysia, various other facilities and incentives have been given to investors in the industry.

“Investors in projects relating to the hotel industry and infrastructure, such as recreational, cultural and handicraft centres, have been given pioneer status, tax allowances and other

facilities,” he told about 500 people, including representatives from Asean and European Community nations attending the two-day Asean-EC meeting here.

He said tourist arrivals in Malaysia increased three-fold from 1.2 million people in 1972 to 3.9 million people last year.

Over the same period,

foreign exchange from the tourist industry increased 10 times from \$266 million to \$2.6 billion.

The Prime Minister urged the people to work harder to sustain the industry's success despite its current performance.

In this respect, he lamented that Malaysia still lagged far behind Asean

countries in tourism.

Statistics showed that Malaysia's share of foreign exchange from tourism in the region added up to only 13 per cent compared with 35 per cent for Singapore and 28 per cent for Thailand.

Dr Mahathir commended the Sarawak State Government for establishing

## of tourist industry

the country's first “live-in” cultural village.

“We must come up with more innovative tourist attractions in order to attract tourists to our country. While it is commendable to establish better and more sophisticated accommodation with hotels, motels and chalets, other recreational activities should also be es-

tablished.

“The Sarawak cultural village is a fine example and we hope that more projects of this nature will be established, not only in Sarawak, but also in other parts of the nation.”

Dr Mahathir said an international study had shown that the travel and tourist industry is the lar-

gest industry in the world, playing a leading role in the economy of developed and developing countries.

He said that Visit Malaysia Year 1990 involved Malaysians from all walks of life and therefore the people should be “friendly, respectful and have an eagerness to be helpful to tourists”.