

Explore tourism

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By Robert Goh

KUALA LUMPUR, Fri. — The Prime Minister has called on Malaysians to explore how the country's tourism resources can be further exploited despite a late start compared with some of her neighbours.

Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad said that Malaysia was a very fortunate country as it was generously endowed not only with rich resources but also with a very unique and varied

flora and fauna.

"However, there are still many other attractions which remain to be discovered, and though tourism in Malaysia has had a late start compared with some of her neighbours, I think she still has a competitive edge in many areas.

"It is, therefore, incumbent upon us to determine the manner in which this resource can be exploited.

"Many visitors are discovering that Malaysia has a lot to offer — from the bustling

city life to the tranquility of palm-fringed beaches and some of the more spectacular sights of nature.

"And as tourism is a relatively young industry, we can learn from the lessons of other countries how best to marry these assets to provide tourists with the holidays of their choice," he said when launching the photo book, *Malaysia: Heart of South East Asia* tonight.

The book project, the most ambitious of its kind, was conceived nearly two

years ago as one of the major international activities for the *Visit Malaysia Year 1990* campaign.

The 256-page photo-essay book was published by Archipelago Press of Singapore for Sydney-based Weldon Owen Publishing, with support from the Culture, Arts and Tourism Ministry and sponsorship from 31 local companies.

Dr Mahathir noted that one area in which Malaysia had fallen behind her neighbours was in the overseas

potential, says PM

market for tourism publications on the country.

"Books are an effective vehicle for promoting a destination and while there are now quite a few on Malaysia, they are not sufficient and are seldom designed to promote the country. Indeed some give an unfair picture of Malaysia.

"I am, therefore, encouraged that the publishers, sponsors and project team have had the foresight to recognise the need for a book which would appeal to

the international market," the Prime Minister said.

He also said that in recent years, tourism had also proven to be a resilient industry the world over.

"It is fast becoming a key economic priority and its contribution as a foreign exchange earner for both the Government and private sector is evident in the improvement in Malaysia's services account of the balance of payments.

"Gross receipts from tourism grew by 24.5 per cent

per annum during the Fifth Malaysia Plan period.

"Without doubt, the country has benefited from the concerted efforts to put Malaysia on the international tourism map.

"The highly successful *Visit Malaysia Year 1990* campaign and the accolades received was the best illustration of the public-private sector teamwork."

Later, asked by reporters whether Malaysia's relations with Australia were back to normal following

the call on him by its Foreign Affairs and Trade Minister Senator Gareth Evans on Tuesday, Dr Mahathir replied: "We'll wait and see what happens."

At that meeting Senator Evans, here to attend the Asean Post-Ministerial Conference, had delivered to Dr Mahathir a letter from Australian Prime Minister Bob Hawke acknowledging that damage had been caused to Malaysia by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's *Embassy* television series.